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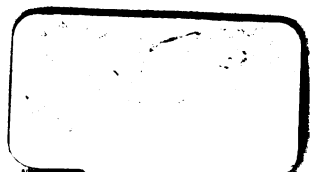
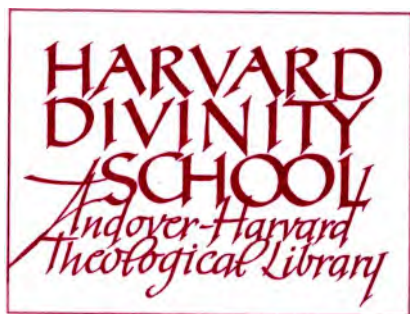
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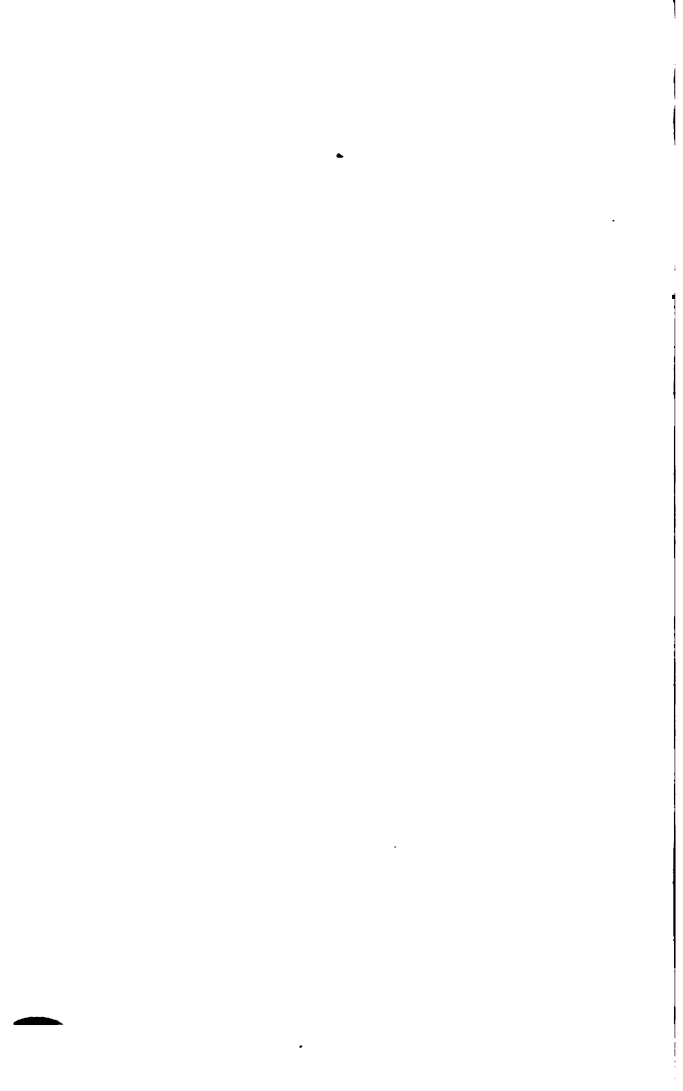
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HISTORICAL SKETCHES
AND
INCIDENTS,
ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE
ESTABLISHMENT AND PROGRESS
OF
UNIVERSALISM,
IN THE STATE OF NEW YORK.

SECOND SERIES.

Stephen
BY S. R. SMITH.
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INTRODUCTION.

In pursuance of the original design of the author, the reader is presented with another vol. of "SKETCHES AND INCIDENTS," illustrative of the planting and growth of Universalism in the State of New York. From circumstances beyond his control, the work has been delayed much longer than was intended. Like its predecessor, it is merely a collection of facts and incidents, with such reflections as were suggested by the state of affairs. The writer has no pretensions to the special indulgence of the public; and offers no apology for adding another, to our accumulating stock of denominational books.

S. R. SMITH,

Buffalo, September, 1847.

HISTORICAL SKETCHES INCIDENTS, &c.

SECOND SERIES.

As stated in the preceding vol. of this work, the effective promulgation of the doctrine of Universal salvation in central New York, commenced in 1805, with the ministry of the Rev. N. Stacy. One or two clergymen had preceded him by a year or two, and some little attention had been attracted to the subject. At least one society had been formed, and several congregations held meetings at irregular periods, as the convenience or engagements of the preachers admitted of their attendance. But like the physical world at the creation, as far as Universalism was visible, it was "without form," till by the ex-

ertions of Mr. Stacy, the elements of order and system were introduced and successfully established. The progress and state of the doctrine up to the close of 1817, has been sketched in the work to which reference is made above. And from which, it will appear, that notwithstanding the established and deep prejudices of the community, the prevailing and cherished unwillingness to know or be taught anything respecting the principles or proofs of Universalism, and the apparently inadequate means for its advancement, it steadily and even rapidly progressed.

During the whole of the preceding period, and occasionally through subsequent years to the present time, Universalists have often been amused as well as surprised, at the re-iterated reports industriously circulated by opposing sects—that Universalism was nearly extinct, except in a very few places, and that in a short time it would be known only as a thing that had been; and this too, in the face of the well known fact, that the denomination was steadily advancing from a few isolated believers, to societies and associations. And in 1817. it

could at any moment have been demonstrated to the satisfaction of any unprejudiced mind—that in *less* than fifteen years from the delivery of the first Universalist sermon in central New York, there had been raised and organized in that region, *forty societies*. At the same time, there were among these, several flourishing churches, which enjoyed a regular ministry and all the cherished ordinances and institutions of the Gospel. So that if there had not been another congregation of kindred believers on the face of the earth, with their numbers and organization, with the zeal and sympathy for which the Universalists of New York, were then distinguished, they were in no danger of extinction. But there were many other societies of kindred believers, both in New England, Pennsylvania and other parts of the Union. And the doctrine of the restitution was progressing on every hand, and in a way so obvious, as scarcely to escape the notice of even a discerning enemy.

The year 1818, furnished many decisive proofs of the progress of Universalism. Estimating the permanent growth and increasing

stability of existing congregations, and the respectable accession of preachers—there are perhaps few periods in the history of the denominations in the state, in which more was achieved, compared with its immediately preceding condition. And seldom indeed, has there been so deep and grateful a sense of prosperity under the manifest approvings of our Heavenly Father, as were felt and expressed by the whole body of believers at this time. The older and better organized societies, were slowly, but surely winning something like courtesy, if not respect, from opposing sects—and there was in many places, a marked difference in the freedom of inquiry, and the independence and boldness with which people approached the subject and attended the meetings of Universalists. It should not be inferred, that the clergymen of the dominant sects were either more charitable, or more condescending—but the members of their congregations in some places, were evidently beginning to feel—what was too often denied, that there was sincerity at least, if not christianity, among their Universalist neighbors.

Up to this time, and for many years afterwards where the doctrine was new, or seldom preached, the congregations of Universalists were almost entirely composed of *men*. For this state of things, there were *two* extremely dissimilar, but equally effective causes. In the first instance, the great body of reflecting men, had become satisfied that all was not right in the prevailing creeds: and while they outwardly admitted and perhaps professed some form of the existing orthodoxy, they mentally questioned or disbelieved some of its fundamental doctrines. This prepared them to hear what could be urged in vindication or proof of the great doctrine of the Resurrection, and to judge of its claims to belief, with a creditable degree of candor and impartiality. On the other hand, an overwhelming majority of the members of churches of the various denominations, were *females*—whose sensibilities were continually excited by the officious zeal of their spiritual guides, and who did not hesitate to represent that nearly every thing evil was embodied in Universalism. To attend the meetings of that denomination,

would be in their estimation, an act, which if it did not immediately jeopardise the safety of their souls, would at all events be lending their countenance to what they deemed the most fatal errors. Through their influence too, a more powerful motive was presented to the female portion of society, to abstain from attending Universalist meetings, Those who could not be influenced by religious considerations, were induced to believe that it was not *respectable*—forgetting that respectable people, carried their characters along with them, and that there could not in the nature of things, be any greater danger of losing their characters in a Universalist meeting, than in many others. The effect intended, was however to a great extent, produced. And in some communities, where the popular religions greatly preponderated, a female who should profess Universalism, or attend the meetings of that denomination, did so at the extreme hazard of losing *caste*. Former associates and even intimate friends would cut her acquaintance; and she might consider herself fortunate, if they did not in direct

terms, assail her character. It is well known, that clergymen of the highest respectability, directly or indirectly encouraged and promoted this vile procedure. I could name one, of great distinction and influence, and who is yet living—who stated in substance before his congregation in Utica, that he suspected the virtue of any female, who attached herself to a Universalist congregation! It required no small degree of moral courage to meet this state of things, and to exercise and enjoy the rights of conscience.

Let no one imagine that this nefarious spirit is extinguished. or that its promptings are not still occasionally visible—and that too, not as they effect Universalism exclusively, but as they apply to the popular standing, or pretensions of other sects. The spirit and motives of religious *clanship*, operate with their original and wonted force; but they no longer speak out in the same terms, nor attempt to perform their work by pursuing the same measures. What might once be accomplished without disguise—by naked and unprovoked scandal, is now oftener aimed at by invidious

comparisons, or social blandishments. And as Universalists have become sufficiently numerous and influential to form and regulate their own social polity, they come in for little, if any more than their share of the obloquy evaporated by ignorance or the frothy ebullitions of sectarian pride.

The session of the Western (now Central) Association, for 1818, was held in the congregational church, at east Hamilton, Madison Co., N. Y., and *ten preachers*, and about twice that number of *lay delegates*, were present. The Universalist society and church, were under a very great and unusual religious excitement. This *awakening* as it was called, had been in progress more than a year; and yet seemed but commencing its operations, and gathering its energies for a much wider diffusion of its influence. The whole community, including the several sects of christians, in the vicinity, seemed to be moved by one common religious impulse. And the meeting of the association at this particular time and place, tended directly and most effectually, to send abroad a similar spirit, through the

instrumentality of the preachers and delegates from distant societies. Never before, had there been a session of that body, marked by so many and so strong indications of deep personal devotion, triumphant hope, and general prosperity. An unusual number and variety of facts combined to produce this result. Among these, may be reckoned—the ardor and zeal of the society at the place of meeting; the number of those who devoutly loved, or sincerely and earnestly sought the truth; the efficiency of the discourses delivered; the number and character of new preachers to whom Letters of Fellowship were granted; and the entire harmony of the council in all its measures and deliberations—all aided in rendering this meeting, one of great interest to those present, and of substantial encouragement to the denomination.

Letters of Fellowship, as ministers of the everlasting Gospel, were granted at this meeting, to John S. Flagler, Andrew Vandenberg, Amos Crandall and Rufus Kingsley.

Mr. Flagler had been educated under all the common influences of the Presbyterian,

or rather Dutch Reformed Church; and until sometime in the preceding year, had felt and expressed the utmost contempt and abhorrence for the doctrine of Universal salvation. In the mean time, that doctrine, through the agency of a few devoted friends, had become a matter of deep and absorbing interest with many persons and families in his immediate vicinity. His neighbors, who were its believers, appointed and held social meetings—they sung, prayed and exhorted; and by an improved and elevated morality, gave evidence of the presence and living power of christianity in their hearts. Mr. Flagler for a time, stood aloof and looked on with silent and cold prejudice; but was at length awakened to the inquiry—"what these things could mean?" He attended the meetings, he heard the reasonings, and examined the doctrines of Universalists; and became a *believer* in the great and sublime truth, that God "is the Saviour of all men, especially of them that believe." This truth was in his estimation, far too precious, humanizing and comforting to admit of silence where there was a tongue to give it

utterance. And he became a preacher of the reconciliation.

Mr. Flager was a man of sound mind, and unexceptionable moral character—a calm, circumspect and strong thinker; never yielding a point until convinced that it was no longer tenable; and never adopting an opinion, while he could urge against it an objection that he felt unable to answer. His rigid adherence to these principles of conduct, has sometimes been regarded as evidence of his obstinacy; but his general kindness, both of spirit and manner, his sterling integrity and uncompromising fidelity to the cause of truth, have won him the respect and confidence, if not the affection of his ministering brethren. As a public speaker, he has ever been distinguished for the clearness and comprehensiveness of his mind, and for the perfect plainness of his discourses. He was of all men, least liable to be misunderstood. He never used notes—but spoke on without any apparent excitement, in a slow and distinct conversational tone; but with sufficient force and distinctness to be easily heard. Like most clergymen of the

denomination of that time, he had few charities or mercies, for what he deemed religious errors; and he never spared friend or foe, when the circumstances seemed to render rebuke either proper or expedient.

There is one trait in the character of Mr. Flagler, not only worthy of regard, but of more general imitation among clergymen. He paid strict attention to his *pecuniary affairs*. He commenced the ministry when in possession of a small but available property; and instead of dissipating it, he has steadily augmented its amount. And this has been effected without parsimonious meanness, by a regu-course of industry and prudence. His salary when he happened to receive one, has probably never been sufficient for his support—yet his house, his home has always been one both of comfort and abundance. At the same time, he has devoted as much time and incurred as great expense in journeyings and attendance on the various duties of his calling, as many others, who with better support always managed—or rather *mismanaged*, to keep themselves miserably poor, if not in a state of

absolute beggary. Neither did he draw supplies from loans of large or small sums, whenever and wherever he could find friends to trust him—nor from the popular methods of representing on all convenient occasions, his wants and his destitution. In these things, he has set an example worthy of all imitation. And he lives surrounded by the comforts which his industry and economy have preserved to him; and in a healthy old age enjoys with gratitude the blessings of his God.

Mr. Vandenberg was carefully nurtured under the faith, peculiar to the Dutch Reformed church; and at an early age, commenced a course of studies preparatory to entering the ministry of that denomination. But his failing health, and it is believed, the further necessity of taking charge of some pecuniary matters, which devolved upon him on the death of his father, induced him to relinquish his purpose of devoting himself to the ministry; and to establish himself in some secular employment. But his devotion to the doctrinal views in which he had been educated, remained unabated. And having finally set-

tled in Onondaga, Co., N. Y., he attached himself to a Presbyterian congregation in the vicinity, then under the charge of the Rev. Dr. Lansing. When the discussion took place between that gentleman and the Rev. Paul Dean, on the great subject at issue concerning the extent of salvation, Mr. Vandenberg was present, with all his accustomed zeal and predilection in favor of his creed. He had entire confidence that his minister could and would demolish the whole fabric of Universalism, in a few minutes. But to his amazement and chagrin, hour after hour passed away, without any apparent achievement in favor of his cherished opinions. He was till this time, entirely ignorant of the real views of Universalists, and by consequence, of the nature and amount of scriptural proof, on which they relied. And as successive arguments and testimony were introduced and urged in favor of the Restitution, he appreciated their bearing and was overwhelmed by their convincing power. At the close of the discussion, he returned home—a Universalist.

The tenderness of Mr. Vandenberg's sympathy, had continually oppressed him with

apprehensions concerning the final destiny of many loved friends, as well as that of mankind in general. But when the great truth of man's ultimate purity and happiness, reached and filled his mind, and warned and inspired his soul—he found the long sought rest and peace. A brighter heaven was not only above him, but its purity and power were within him. From that time forward, he openly professed and vindicated the doctrine of the Restitution. He never devoted himself exclusively to the ministry—his temporal concerns occupying much of his time, and his impaired constitution forbade any effort to assume the duties of so laborious a calling. He desired the communion and fellowship of the ministry, that he might, under the sanction of the denomination, officiate at funerals and on such occasions as his friends deemed necessary or proper. He was much esteemed as a christian and a man; but has been little known as a preacher of the reconciliation.

Mr. Crandall was a young man of a high order of talents—of strong feelings, quick apprehension, untiring industry, and most ex-

emplary virtue. To what particular denominations he had been previously attached, is not certainly known; but it is believed, to the Baptist. No man ever entered the vineyard of the great Master, with purer motives, or with more firm resolves, and more fixed and ardent zeal. The character of his discourses, added to the consideration of his sound common sense and personal worth, soon brought him to be regarded as one of the most useful, as well as talented ministers in the state. But his constitution was inadequate to the rugged duties of his profession. For at that time, a vast amount of labor was to be expended in travelling, in the region of his location. And this was often done by him, in all states of weather, and in all conditions of health. He had determined never to disappoint a congregation, and as some of his engagements were at the distance of 40 or 50 miles, he was frequently exposed to great sufferings. He ultimately settled at Brooklyn, Susquehanna, Co. Pa., and labored successfully for a season in that place and vicinity. But his previous and continued exertions were beyond his strength.

He soon fell into a decline—and died in 1824, loved, honored and deeply mourned.

Mr. Kingsley was esteemed as a worthy and upright man, and a candid and exemplary christian. He resided in Bradford Co. Pa., and as there was no minister of the order in his vicinity, he asked and obtained, a Letter of Fellowship, that he might feel authorized to conduct public worship on such occasions as required the services of a clergyman. With few exceptions, it is understood that his labors have been limited to an attendance on *funerals*, In this department of the ministry, there is reason to believe that he has not only brought the consolations of the gospel to many sorrowing hearts, but that he has rendered good service to the cause of Universal grace and salvation.

It was at this session of the Association, that intelligence was received of the death, of one of our most able, worthy and esteemed Ministers—Rev. Isaac Root, of Mottville, Onondaga Co. He was a preacher of the Old Baptist school, with which denomination he had formerly been connected—plain, blunt

and profoundly earnest. No man made less pretensions than he, to either science or refinement; and very few could legitimately aspire to his shrewdness and sound common sense. His discourses were replete with great conceptions; and his words laden with vast import, were poured forth like waters from a fountain. His phrase was homely, but suggestive; and he awakened in the minds of his hearers, more ideas in a single sermon, than could be gathered from a ship-load of refined and attenuated sentimentalism. He was the first minister of the reconciliation, whose death, the denomination in New York, was called to mourn. And he was mourned, as a friend and counsellor, as a devout christian and able minister, as a useful and honest man. He died as he had lived, in the principles of the faith of a world's salvation, and in patient resignation to the will of his Father in heaven.

During the same session, the association was called upon to exercise its ecclesiastical authority in matters of discipline. Complaints were brought against the ministerial character

of Calvin Winslow and David Gilson—both of whom held the Fellowship of the association. The latter was already under discipline; and was suspended from fellowship to which he was never restored. Mr. Winslow made no defence, the proofs sustaining the charge of *intemperance*, were abundant and conclusive, and fellowship was accordingly withdrawn.

The circumstances which required these decisive measures, were the more regretted, not only because the denomination was in great want of ministers; but more especially because the immoralities of its clergymen, were calculated to enhance the prejudices of the community—already sufficiently vindictive. The prompt and decisive measures of the Association, would, if duly considered, tend to mitigate the evil, by showing that Universalists as a people, had no sympathy and held no fellowship with licentiousness. And that they were as ready as any others to employ the means necessary for the maintenance of good order, and for the advancement of truth, virtue and happiness.

Instances like that to which reference has just been made—and many similar ones among other sects, were eminently calculated to impress upon all reflecting minds the importance and necessity of a great *temperance* reformation. The habit of drinking intoxicating liquors, of some kind, and indeed of all kinds, was nearly universal. And unfortunately, few classes of men, were more exposed to the sin of absolute drunkenness, than clergymen. Where local, there the parochial visits always brought out the *bottle*, at every place, at which they called. And then, the variety of the material, and the still greater difference in the quality—from the choicest production of the vat, or distillery, down to the most villanous of all drugged abominations—all this is to be taken into account; and we may well wonder that any mortal man could taste it all in a few hours, and remain sober. However much it may be regretted, that occasionally an individual fell, when we reflect on the besetments to which all were exposed, we cannot fail of feeling both surprise and gratitude that so many passed the ordeal without faltering and

without reproach. And we feel an honest pride in recording the fact, that clergymen in general, and Universalist clergymen in particular, have been and still are, among the most devoted friends, and zealous and untiring advocates of the temperance reformation. May the benignity of their principles sustain, and hasten its triumph.

The prevalent characteristics of the clergymen of the order, were perhaps never more perfectly exemplified, than at this meeting of the association. And as very great changes have taken place in the ministry, in the intervening years since; it may neither be improper nor wholly uninteresting, if we embody a few of the facts as they were then produced in living reality.

The custom of appointing a preacher to deliver what is called, the "occasional sermon," had not then obtained in any of the Associations. Of course, when the annual session came round, and the proper organization of the council had been effected—no one knew who was to deliver the opening discourse. This service therefore, was gener-

ally devolved upon a stranger, if one was present—otherwise upon some young preacher whose *gifts* the denomination had not tested—or some one was selected who was considered ready for all emergencies, “in season and out of season.” On this occasion, Mr. Whitnal, one of the most eccentric of mankind, but withal both a ready and a strong preacher, was appointed to deliver the morning sermon.

Mr. Whitnal read his text, Rom. 8: 29, 30, and no doubt gave, as he more commonly did, a sound doctrinal discourse. I was in the Desk with him, having been selected to offer the introductory prayer—and as a *special favor*, to a young man, had just been informed that it was arranged for me to preach the first sermon in the afternoon. The nature and value of this timely notice, will be better understood, when it is known—that *not one* of our number, used notes. And on these public occasions, our sermons were often extempore in the fullest sense of the term. Some *three* or *four* hours time for preparation, was therefore a favor of no small importance. For notwithstanding the occasion, and its require-

ments, the mind habituated to perpetual and similar exertions, could generalize a few ideas, and be able to present them with more of the semblance of method, than if that time had been denied. When Mr. W. read his text, I was able to overlook the passage, and my mind was impressed with the words immediately following. These were accordingly selected as the basis of my own discourse.

The afternoon came, and with it the services as previously arranged. On giving out the text, Rom. 8: 31, my successor—who was to preach the *second* sermon on the close of mine—was observed to smile; and at the same time, he whispered to another, that he should take the next verse. Happily I am neither permitted nor disposed to judge what the character of my sermon was; though it is by no means difficult to imagine what it must have been under the circumstances. Whatever it was—it was, as the lady recommended to John Wesley—such as I had “trusted the Lord for;” and it was kindly received.

At the close of my discourse, Mr. Kneeland entered the Desk, and gave as the text, Rom.

8: 32, thus furnishing the evidence by the selection, that unless he had previously made the passage the subject of discourse, his only preparation for its delivery, was made in about *half an hour*, and while listening to another. His sermon like most of his discourses, was exceedingly plain and intelligible; and was delivered in a strain of fervency and earnestness, which his cold nature did not often permit him to evince. Thus closed the public services of the first day of the session.

On the following day, Mr. Ferris preached the morning sermon. And the congregation appeared much gratified, when he read for his text, Rom. 8: 33, thus giving the assurance of *four* successive discourses from *five* consecutive verses of the same chapter. He was regarded as a sound, and indeed a powerful preacher, and never did any one more effectually sustain a reputation, than he did on this occasion. His object was to exhibit the scripture doctrine of Election, as distinguished from any and all limited, or partial views or results; and this he effected with a power and pungency of argument and expression, alike intel-

- ligible and convincing. The congregational clergymen was present, and commenced taking notes with the utmost composure. Indeed, it was the opinion of some, that when he placed himself in a conspicuous seat in front of the pulpit, and drew forth his writing materials—he did so, with something more than ordinary self-complacency. However this might be, after listening for some *ten* or *fifteen* minutes, he unconsciously dropped his paper, and clenching his pencil with a convulsive grasp, he remained fixed as a statue 'till the end of the discourse. Had the message to which he was listening, been communicated by some immediate and visible superhuman agency, he could not have betrayed more astonishment. The subject—at least the view taken of it was evidently new to him; and it was enforced by arguments so comprehensive and convincing, and proofs so overpowering, that in his surprise, he lost all self-command.

The first sermon in the afternoon, was delivered by Dr. Green, from Rom. 10: 14, 15. The Dr. had formerly preached in the Baptist connexion, where he had imbibed

that peculiar *tone*, for which the ministers of that denomination were formerly so much distinguished. This tone, as well as some habitual oddities, he brought with him, when he became a convert to Universalism. Among his peculiarities, was a very remarkable facility in illustrating his discourses. He never appeared at a loss—something, and it seemed quite immaterial what, presented itself and was thrown in, and generally in the right place, and which gave the hearer the most vivid impression of the thing intended. It rendered the merest abstraction tangible, and made thought itself an object of sight. An instance in point, occurred, during the delivery of the sermon in question, which none of his auditors will be likely to forget. He defined at considerable length, the qualifications of a Gospel ministers; and insisted that if the preacher was faithful to his trust—if he communicated only that, which he was sent to teach, then, he would himself be sustained by divine *grace*, and become the honored instrument of dispensing it to those “that heard him.”

Here the Dr. commenced drawing an opposite character. He supposed a preacher going forth in his own strength; and inferred the kind of influences by which he would be moved, and which he would most probably exert in the moral world. And he run this parallel along, until he had occasion to illustrate the destitution of such a professed messenger of good tidings, so sinful man. At the moment, and with the utmost gravity, he threw himself forward; and leaning across the pulpit and reaching far downwards with his hands, he gave a see-saw motion to the part of his body visible from below. When the motion was downward, he exclaimed—“*a preacher without the grace of God, is like,*” Here he stopped, apparently to master his subject, take breath and lift himself up again. Having accomplished this—if indeed so much was intended—he came pitching down again, and at the same time repeating—“*is like,*” when as before, he stopped short, and again remained silent till he recovered nearly an erect position. The next moment, and he was again coming down with the same, “*is like,*”

when pausing an instant, he began slowly to rise, and finished the sentence by saying—*“like a pump without water.”* This was uttered with solemn gravity, and in the most delicious cadence of his old Baptist tones; and accompanied as it was, with an action every way suited to the subject, it may well be imagined that the effect was absolutely irresistible. The repetition of the apparent effort to reach the subject—the seeming difficulty and delay in doing so, notwithstanding the ludicrous manner in which it was conducted—gave a degree of force and clearness to the idea conveyed, that no mere words can ever impart. We saw as it were, the mental and physical exertions of mankind for the attainment of the water of life—saw them seeking it, where it was not to be found—saw them looking for it through instrumentalities, as dry and deficient as themselves, and hundreds smiled and wept under the impression.

It would be exceedingly difficult for any one, at the present time, when at least common civility is interchanged among the different religious sects, to form a very correct

and impressive idea of the feelings it excited in one who seldom met with it in preachers of other denominations. And we mention a case, not for any importance which it possesses, but for its *rarity*. It is really but the *second* of the kind, with which the writer was honored, during *five successive years*. He had on several occasions, received the distant and patronising condescensions of ministers of opposing sects; but with the exception named—nothing like the expression of cordial and respectful civility. It is not intended, that every preacher with whom we came in contact, was absolutely uncivil—though some were so—but they very generally avoided every token of clerical courtesy, which was not evidently extorted from them by their fears of public reprehension.

One of my friends had made an appointment for me, in Madison Village, Madison Co. N. Y., on a week day evening, as a kind of preliminary to my first sabbath meeting in that place. On arriving, it was ascertained that a distinguished Quaker preacher—Joseph Bound—also had an appointment in the same

house, at the same hour. My appointment was acknowledged prior in point of time, and my friends had the unquestioned right to control the house. But happily, there was no wish to push matters to extremity. The preachers were strangers to all but a few, and to each other; and passively sat down to await the result of a brief consultation on the state of affairs, between their mutual friends. The matter was soon settled—that both should preach—and both did preach, accordingly. Neither discourse was particularly doctrinal, but directed to the advancement of the great and beneficent principles of the Gospel, and the services closed with mutual salutations and kind feelings. No man could be more kind and affectionate, than this good old Quaker. Nor was there one solitary trait of the bigot or sectarian, beyond the peculiar and habitual phraseology and cant of his denomination. He was entirely willing that all men should be saved; although he had not so understood the teachings of the divine spirit. And if that was the truth, he wished me all prosperity in its propagation—and all the rewards of good intentions, even if I was mistaken.

In view of this little incident, let me ask the reader—what he would be likely to think of a class of men, with whom his professional pursuits frequently brought him in contact, and who, during five years, should but *twice*, show him any but the most constrained civility? To this, he must add the consideration that he is not accused of any moral offence, that he is acknowledged to be a peaceable citizen, and admitted to be diligent in his efforts to spread his opinions among mankind. Let him still add, that his views are constantly misrepresented; that his motives are called in question; that the influence of his principles is affirmed to be dangerous; and that in a thousand ways he is openly and maliciously insulted. Let him pass through all this, and feel it, as any man with a soul in him would feel—and he will then be in a condition to put the question seriously to himself, whether his charity for the pretensions of his opponents, had not sensibly diminished. Let him also ask himself, whether it be not very likely, that in meeting and rebutting their assaults and slanders, he would dispense with the smoother

forms of rebuke, and "call things by their right names? And is it not quite probable, that he might become excited on the subject, and in his zeal to justify himself and expose the sophistry, misrepresentations and hostility of his persecutors, unnecessarily widen the distance between them, by ill-timed or uncalled for severity?

The above remarks are made with reference to the prevailing opinion, that the older preachers of Universalism, were unmercifully severe upon other denominations. And it is very true that they were so. But they are by no means remarkable for severity, at the present time. The reasons of this great change are quite obvious—the causes which inspired, and for a season kept in vigorous operation the talent for rebuke, have nearly all passed away. Those therefore, who are disposed to wonder at the volleys of vituperation which were once sent forth by the Universalist clergy, will do well to repress their astonishment, until they are placed in similar circumstances. But as these can probably never return, and can therefore no more be

felt, he who should unnecessarily renew the conflict, whether old or young, would but "beat the air." Christian charity as well as courtesy, has greatly advanced among all sects; and we should be ready to meet it with the plenitude of that kindness which springs from the grace of the gospel, and the feelings of fraternity with man.

The vindictive hostility of the enemies of Universalism, took a very wide range, and occasionally descended to low and even trifling particulars. Sometimes, this epidemic malignity assumed forms, and developed itself in ways so gross or ludicrous, as only to awaken pity, or excite ridicule. And as Universalism was now (1818) more or less known and discussed throughout Central and Western N. Y., there was probably never a time when the petty animosities of all classes of *opposers*, were more frequently displayed. The following incidents will serve for illustrations.

In the country towns generally, it is customary to have a *sermon* delivered on all funeral occasions. This custom is not confined to any particular sect, but prevails even among

those whose ministers do not yield an habitual conformity to its requirements. It was on one of these occasions, that I was beset with a continual and systematic grumbling—the *first* and the *last* thing of the kind, that it has fallen to my lot to encounter. A young man, about 20 years of age, had been instantly cut down while in the midst of health and strength; and as the suddenness of the dispensation excited an unusual degree of sympathy for the afflicted family, so it brought together a large congregation at the funeral. Very soon after the commencement of the discourse, I perceived that some one kept muttering; and occasionally speaking so loud, as to attract the notice of that part of the congregation within the house. The position of the speaker did not permit him to see the person, who made the disturbance; but it was not difficult to detect a *female voice*, and that whoever it was, she was uttering maledictions against Universalism. This noise went steadily forward in an under tone, as a kind of *accompaniment*; and as it soon ceased to attract the notice of the auditory, so it gave very little trouble to

the speaker. At the close of the service, I asked a gentleman, who it was, that fretted so much, and seemed desirous of making disturbance "O," said he, "nobody but D. W's wife, who though a church member, is *very drunk*, even for her!" The response was uttered loud enough to be distinctly heard—"Here is proof then, that all the drunkards are not Universalists."

. The foregoing represents the grosser forms in which popular ignorance, and even vice, exhibited its spleen against a system of religion that it was incapable of understanding. The following instance, shows the more refined methods, by which the same ends were sometimes sought.

In the winter of this year, (1818,) as the writer was returning from a distant appointment, he met the eccentric Mr. Whitnal, in the street of a certain village in Onondaga Co. And as we were mutually desirous of enjoying an hour's conversation, we agreed to put our horses under a tavern shed near by, and call at the house of a friend. While giving some directions concerning our beasts,

the landlord came out; and from some remark learning our intention, he politely asked us in, saying that he had a good fire in his sitting room and no company. We of course accepted his offer—found things as he stated; and found ourselves more at liberty to talk over our own matters, than we probably should at the house of a friend. After sitting a few minutes, our host, who appeared to be “busy here and there,” led in and introduced his wife—an intelligent and interesting woman. She seemed disposed to be courteous, conversed about the prejudices of sectarians, and regretted their existence—but took no pains to conceal her utter dislike of Universalism. In the mean time, some travellers in an adjoining room, having learned that we were Universalist preachers, entered and asked permission to be present at our conversation—when our hostess rose, and observed that as it was not far from tea time, she hoped we would stay to tea, if not otherwise engaged. This request was made so frankly, and pressed so earnestly by the husband, that we consented to remain. In due time the table was

spread; and the good lady with perfect gravity and decorum poured the tea. There was no mistaking the fact however—that there was not a particle of *tea* in the whole affair! My friend Whitnal, was not only fond of tea, but he dearly loved a practical joke, even when at least one half was at his own expense. Nor was it by any means an easy matter to fix one so firmly on him, that he would not throw it back upon the perpetrator with interest. He swallowed the *hot water* in an instant; and jogging me with his elbow, passed his cup for replenishing, before the lady had served half the family. He proceeded in this way, with a perseverance truly astonishing, and until the contents of the tea-pot were fairly exhausted; when with most provoking gravity, he again presented his cup, observing to our hostess who began to exhibit great embarrassment—that being “very fond of tea, when it was *rather weak*, he took the more of it.” It was not difficult at this time, to see in whose favor the joke had issued—the conflict had fairly terminated—the petty insult had been successfully and in perfect good humor,

thrown back upon its polite author, who having done penance in drinking hot water too, instantly rose and disappeared.

The Genesee Branch of the Western Association, held its annual session for 1818, in the town of Ontario; in the county of Ontario; and as usual, found abundant reasons for rejoicing and congratulation. Could the same denomination, as it now exists in this region, look upon that meeting with all its concomitants, as a few remaining individuals still do—it is more than probable that little would be found calculated to cheer the heart of the believer. But the day of palpable progress, of accumulation of strength, numbers and influence, had not then come; and believers were content and inexpressibly happy, in witnessing small gains and individual accessions. The entire section of the state, lying west of Cayuga Lake, was nominally comprised within the limits of this Branch Association; and at this time, *four years* after its organization. it probably numbered *six societies*, and about the same number of preachers. The opening of

a new field of ministerial labor, the gathering of another congregation, the formation of one more Society, or the accession of another preacher, were matters of great import; and they were in all instances, eminently calculated to stimulate the hopes and strengthen the hands of believers. One new society had been formed during the recess of the Association, which gave promise of stability and increasing influence; and one important accession to the ministry had occurred during the same time.

It should be kept in mind that the labors of the few preachers, were by no means confined to societies; and that there were many more congregations to which they ministered, than entered into any proper organization. The great want therefore, was, of a greater number of efficient clergymen. A few, good and true men, were making "full proof," of their ministry; but the number was altogether inadequate to the necessities of the denomination in this immense region. Accordingly, the settlement of the venerable Thomas Gross, in the vicinity of Buffalo, and to whom a

Letter of Fellowship, as a minister of the reconciliation, was given at this session, was an event of great moment to the cause of Universalism in Western New York. He was a convert from the Congregational ministry; and had until recently, been connected with a society of that denomination in the central part of the state. He was already, what is called 'an old man'; but retained the vigor of his intellect, and lived some years to do successful battle for the cause of divine truth. The following note relative to Mr. Gross, was appended by the late Rev. W. I. Reese, to the Minutes of the session of 1818.

"At this session, the cause of Universalism received new vigor, by the acquisition of Br. Thomas Gross, whose talents have contributed so much to the diffusion of knowledge and correct understanding. Br. Gross, if I mistake not, had been for many years, a preacher of the Congregational order; but had lost none of that moral excellence and christian forbearance for which he was, and since his conversion to Universalism, has been distinguished. In 1823, he commenced the publi-

cation of a religious periodical, (at Buffalo,) called the "Gospel Advocate," a work of deserved merit. And the venerable and worthy Editor evinced himself—a successful advocate of the truth, a powerful defender of the christian system, a faithful servant of Christ, and an honor to his profession."

The year 1819 while it furnished no particular discouragements, was distinguished by few remarkable indications of the progress of Universalism in New York. It is safe however to say, that while nothing was lost, much more was gained, than appeared in the estimate of the numbers and increase of the denomination. The revival in Hamilton and vicinity, was attaining its maximum; and the impulse which it had sent abroad, though sensibly felt over many congregations, had not yet produced any very decisive results. Still it was a year of general and great activity in the denomination; and the best exertions of both preachers and societies, were never put forth with greater zeal, or more determined perseverance. The opposition encountered

was probably more matured; than at any previous time. Be this as it may—it was settled, cold, calculating and systematic. It fabricated, or magnified some idle report to the discredit of Universalism; and always laying the scene in the distance, circulated it with busy activity and unblushing assurance. It stood aloof from any knowledge of Universalism; and when professing to state the principles and doctrines of the believers in the restitution, ignorantly or maliciously misrepresented both the believers and their opinions. It busied itself in efforts to prevent the attendance of people upon the meetings of the denomination; by subjecting church members to rebuke, by warning the timid, by admonishing the youth, and by exerting every available form of influence over those it hoped to control.

Universalists had already been effectually taught, that they must rely on their own resources; but they seemed now more than ever convinced of the necessity of concentrating and embodying such as they could command. As in all other ages of the world,

reproach for the sake of honest opinion, induces the oppressed to cling to their views with greater tenacity; so Universalists not only cherished theirs with deeper fondness, but put forth every effort for their diffusion. And it is morally certain that ministers and others who sincerely loved the truth and were even willing to make sacrifices for its promotion, were impelled to put forth energies, and to perform labors, and to endure privations, which they never would have done, but for the vindictiveness of the opposition. And from what is known of the labors of ministers, there is little doubt that a greater number of sermons was preached by them during this year, than by an equal number in any other year, since the establishment of the denomination in the state.

It may not perhaps be assumed, that there was a greater number of *good sermons* delivered, than in any similar period, by the same, or an equal number of preachers. The circumstances of the denomination at that time, were such as to render that matter extremely doubtful. But this much is certain—whether

good or bad, they were beyond all question, the best that the circumstances permitted; and as good as any reasonable man could expect. They were in most instances, sound doctrinal discourses, delivered without *notes*, in such phrase as the speaker could command, and without pretension or ostentation. Some of them were chaste and unobjectionable productions, replete with great ideas and suggestive sentiments—others were poured forth without the slightest regard to the courtesies of expression, or even to the grammar of the language. The more objectionable and therefore assailable parts of the prevailing theology; such as the doctrine of the trinity, a vicarious atonement, imputed righteousness, and that of endless punishment, were treated without ceremony, and almost without charity. Universalists were in the mean time, urged by all the considerations growing out of a consistent and glorious system of moral truth, to practice a higher and a purer virtue, than was exemplified by the surrounding sects. Nearly all rites and ordinances save those of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and in some instances

even these—were repudiated; and believers were earnestly besought to give *less* attention to the mere semblance of religion, and to practice *more* of its substantial requirments.

As might be expected, these views were attractive to those who had become disgusted with the symbols of piety in those who frequently outraged morality; and they were diffused far and wide over the denomination. Many, whose faith would abide the test of martyrdom, never thought themselves worthy of a place at the communion table; and while they were ever ready to relieve the poor, to minister to the sick, and to do good according to their ability, would probably have blushed if called to officiate in public prayer. The natural consequences of this state of things, followed. Universalists were practically honest and benevolent, profound haters of nearly every thing bearing the stamp of the dominant orthodoxy, able controversialists, and zealous in the promotion of their principles; but characteristically deficient in the customs and means usually regarded as evidences of piety and devotion. And this, though readily,

accounted for, was to some extent doctrimental to the prosperity of the denomination. It induced the general belief among other sects, and who to a great degree controlled public opinion—that there was very little true and vital religion, however much morality there might be, among Universalists.

The Western Association met this year (1819,) in the town of Lisle, Broome county, N. Y., and again enjoyed a very pleasant and happy session. The congregations were unusually large, and evinced a deep and devotional interest in the truth; the public services were creditable to those who took part in them; and the business of the session was conducted with entire and cordial unanimity. The communications received from Delegates, by Letters from different societies and churches, and from preachers in attendance were very generally of the most encouraging character. If they did not give assurance of great increase, they contained the evidence of fidelity and harmony; two things to be prized above any mere aggregation of num-

bers. And these were among the things, that gave such a deep and affecting interest to the annual meetings of the Association. They forcibly recalled the impression which we have, of the occasional assemblies of the primitive disciples, who congregated as best they might, poured out their supplications and thank offerings to God with full hearts, exhorted one another to love, patience, and good works—and then went forth to bear wrong and reproach from an unbelieving world. All were happy; for the assembled multitudes were for the time withdrawn from the scenes of their conflicts and trials, and here found sympathizing friends.

Several things conspired to remind us of the early days of christianity—and even of the peculiar circumstances connected with the advent of our Lord. The public services were held in a capacious Barn; and many a patriarch of the faith, was most literally “cradled in a manger.” The factitious distinctions of human condition, were here most effectually levelled; and rich and poor, and old and young renewed the recollection, that the great

Master of christians—the “author and finisher of their faith,” had, once condescended to the same humiliation. Not the slightest degradation was felt—for it was not *place*, but *principle* in which all were concerned. And from this place, went out influences that strengthened many kindred hearts, that wrought new convictions of duty, and inspired new resolutions to profess, support and vindicate the “grace of God that bringeth salvation to all men.”

At this session of Association, Letters of Fellowship as ministers of the Reconciliation, were granted to Elisha Packard and Alfred Peck—two upright and faithful men, who through long years of trial have retained their integrity unimpeached and unimpeachable. Mr. Peck has throughout devoted himself to the duties of his calling, with all diligence; and never wearies in projecting measures and performing labors for the benefit of the denomination. His success has not always corresponded with his intentions; but as these have always been in favor of humanity, as well as aimed at the advancement of

of the truth, he will have the satisfaction of feeling that while he sought to do good, his only error was in the choice of means.

Mr. Packard intended only to minister occasionally; and has uniformly occupied himself in some secular employment. The following statement from memory, was substantially made by Mr. Packhard; and may not even now, be destitute of interest. He was originally attached to the Baptists, not as a member—but from education, or the preferences of his family, which it is believed, was connected with that denomination. He was also a *sailor*; and had for many years been the Captain, or Master of a vessel, which usually sailed to some European port. On a return voyage, and not many months previous to his application for a Letter of Fellowship, he was wrecked at some place off the American coast. During the excitement, sufferings, and perils of that terrible scene, he was *converted* to Universalism. Sudden and unsought, as was this great change in his sentiments, it baptised his whole soul into the spirit and power of the Gospel; and while it calmed his

troubled mind, it gave him resolution to bear up with fortitude and hope under the labors, privations, and sufferings, to which he was subjected. On arriving at Boston, he immediately applied to Rev. Paul Dean, with whom he had formerly had a slight acquaintance, for some testimonial under which he might preach that glorious gospel, which had brought peace and comfort to his own soul. Such testimonial was accordingly given; and thus commenced his ministry. Soon after this, and while visiting some friends in central New York, he attended, and received the Fellowship of the Western Association. How much, or how long, he has ministered, is not known. But his old age is passing away in the midst of friends, where he enjoys the communion of kindred believers; and where, in a Universalist sanctuary, he worships that God who filled his soul with the power of the Gospel, and by its influences prepared him for life or for death.

In the course of this year (1819,) the cause of Universal grace received an impulse in

the Society at New Hartford, by one of the most extraordinary instances of the sustaining power of divine truth, in the hour of death, ever given by an uninspired person. It is easy to imagine that the exciting circumstances connected with martyrdom, are calculated to give a factitious elevation to the human soul—to force the mind from its ordinary level, and to arm it with an unusual fortitude. A species of mental courage is thus created and exerted, which does not strictly appertain to the individual; and hence effeminacy itself, may for the time, be inspired with an energy that bids defiance to the utmost terrors of a violent death. But the case is far different, when slow but sure-working disease fixes its grasp upon a single member of some quiet household. There, the occasional mitigations of suffering; the alternations in the aspects of disease, are all fitted to cheat the victim out of the conviction of imminent danger. Besides, there are in such instances a multitude of considerations every way calculated to render the attachment to life, more fixed and influential, than usually exist in seasons of

persecution. There is little to agitate and surprise, and consequently to lift the soul above itself and its ordinary aspirations. But Universalism has power and influences adapted even to these occasions; and can inspire feelings, and impart a form of chastened submission, seldom felt or exhibited by the martyr.

A young lady, about 17 years of age, nurtured under the auspices of Universalism, was rapidly declining with pulmonary consumption. This family, I was accustomed to visit occasionally; and of course, to see the sick daughter and observe the progress of the disease. She never murmured, never repined; but though evidently conscious of her situation, always appeared composed and even cheerful. Being at length called to visit and spend the night with the family, it was apparent that the sufferings of the sick one, were near their consummation. She could only converse in a whisper, and that, at intervals; nor could she hear much conversation without exhaustion. A part of the evening was spent in her room; and she took a proper and decided interest in the exposition of one, or more pas-

sages of the scriptures, which were suggested by her parents.

The following morning, she sent for me to come to her room; when I found her sitting in an arm-chair. On entering and speaking to her, she drew up the sleeve of her dress from the left arm, baring it half way to the elbow—and looking up, said with a smile—“Look here, I believe that I have lived about long enough.” Supposing that the conversation of the preceding evening, might have produced some degree of excitement, and being desirous of testing the depth and consistency of her views—I asked, why she thought so? She replied in substance, that she suffered so much, was so exhausted, and so emaciated, that life had lost its charms, and she thought she was *willing to die*. She betrayed no excitement, the subject had evidently been one of long previous thought, and her manner evinced her entire conviction of the truth of what she uttered. Her parents—indeed all the members of her family were present; and it was evident that this was the first instance in which she had expressed her

views on the subject. Like myself, they were taken by surprise, as it was not known that she had given more attention to the scriptures and to religious subjects, than was common to persons of the same age. I proceeded to ask her, if she would not prefer to be restored to health, were it possible? She replied, that perhaps she should, if she could be restored instantly, as by a miracle; but that if it were possible by ordinary means, it would take so long, and she should suffer so much, that—she *thought* she preferred to die. She was then asked, whether the consideration of the comforts by which she was surrounded, the society of her many friends, and the affectionate interest felt for her by her parents, did not on the whole make her wish to live? She reflected a moment, and then said—No—I have lost all relish for such enjoyments as outward comforts can give—I cannot enjoy the society of my young friends—and though I love my parents, they cannot wish to see me suffer, nor can I bear to see them unhappy on my account; and I *believe* that I am willing to die! At the same time she added that

she was satisfied with the promises of the Gospel.

This occurred on Friday morning. The hour of trial had not yet come; and though there was no doubt that it was rapidly approaching, there were still no particular indications of immediate dissolution. It was therefore natural for us to infer, that the resolution formed under the prospect of death at an uncertain, though not distant period, might be shaken or entirely give way before the cold touch of the destroyer. But we were mistaken. Her mind had grasped all the sustaining considerations afforded by the Gospel; and while she saw the world receding, it was without regret, and with child-like assurance she looked forward to a home and happiness in the bosom of her God. On the following Sunday, her father and a female friend were called out of church to attend upon her; and she expired at about 9 o'clock the same evening.

She had become assured that her time had now come; and she was prepared for the event. Soon after sun-set, she desired her

father to send for the material for her shroud. It was accordingly obtained, and at her request, made up in her presence. While this was being done, she exerted herself in conversation with the family, and in making a distribution of her wardrobe, and such other things as she considered her property. By this time, her sight was probably failing, as she desired her father to hold a light near the clock which was but a few feet from her, and directly in view. After telling the time, she requested her father to examine her pulse, giving it as her own opinion that it was withdrawing from the extremities. He did so, and was satisfied that she had judged correctly; but hesitated to inform her. She urged and obtained his admission; looked calmly round upon her friends—bade them farewell—folded her arms; said “I am^e ready”—and expired.

Several friends of the family, but opposers of Universalism, were present at this scene; and were very much surprised at the perfect composure and christian hope evinced by the dying girl. One of them in relating the inci-

dents of that evening, exclaimed—"I know not what it is—but if that is Universalism I should wish to die a Universalist." But it *was* the power of the Gospel as professed by Universalists—and was one of the first and most impressive instances in the vicinity, of its sustaining power in the hour of death. Friends viewed it as little less than a divine interposition, designed for the rebuke of insolent sectarians; and enemies were silenced, who had perpetually clamored about the insufficiency of the doctrine of the restitution in a dying hour. It required a degree of prejudice and assurance to which few were equal to assert, that Universalism would not 'do to die by'—after the contrary had been demonstrated before their eyes, by a youth of *seventeen years*. And thus, this presumptuous averment of the enemies of God's truth, with many other equally absurd and ridiculous attempts to render the doctrine of illimitable grace odious in public estimation, may be considered as things that *were*, but *are* not.*

*This death scene was published by the writer at the time.

In the summer of this year (1819,) a powerful impression for a time, was made upon a very large congregation by the *Dedication of a child*. And the incident is related, not for its intrinsic importance—but for the information of those who may not know that such an ordinance is observed by Universalists. It is however the distinctive denominational rite. Children are indeed baptised by Universalists; but in this there is nothing peculiar, as other denominations do the same. And though it is believed that some other sects, sometimes *Dedicate*—it is not in accordance with their general customs. No water is used in the administration—the rite being intended as an imitation of our Savior's example of taking "little children in his arms," or laying "his hand upon their heads," and blessing them.

A large congregation had assembled at the Baptist church in Norwich, Chenango county, at the ordination of Mr. Flagler—of whom we have already spoken. At the close of the services appertaining to that occasion, the auditory was requested to remain; and the Rev. Mr. Stacy placed himself at the altar and an-

nounced that the rite of *dedication* was to be administered. The parents (Thurlow Weed Esq. and wife, now of Albany,) came forward and presented the infant, when the administrator offered a short prayer. There was the hush and stillness of death over the congregation—for as very few had ever witnessed the rite, every one seemed intent on seeing and hearing everything connected with its administration. Immediately after the prayer, Mr. Stacy took the child in his arms and commenced the benediction; but after uttering a few words, his voice sunk—he paused—the service was wholly suspended. Yet no one moved—moments, minutes even passed—still all seemed fixed in their places and in silence. I ventured to look over the pulpit in which I was standing—beneath it stood the good man, tenderly holding the child in his arms—his face turned toward the heavens—the tears streaming down his cheeks, and his utterance denied by the overwhelming intensity of his feelings. Soon the whole congregation burst into tears, and sighs and sobs spoke forth the deep emotions of the heart. The service was

resumed and suitably closed—and that congregation broke up with deeper and more hallowed feelings, than ordinarily falls to the lot of worshippers. For there was a beauty and propriety in the service which owned God as a Father; which acknowledged his right to give and take away; and which sought his blessing upon the head of infant innocence, that soothed, and won, and satisfied the soul.

Sometime in the course of this year, an extraordinary religious movement occurred in Henderson, in the county of Jefferson. It is believed that the only instance in which a Universalist clergyman had even preached in the town. was some *six or seven years previous*. In the adjoining town of Ellisbury, a small society of believers had been gathered—but at the time, it did not keep up a meeting, and had never had preaching except on occasional visits from distant clergymen. No effort had ever been made for the purpose of gathering a congregation in Henderson. and it is probable that few persons had any knowledge of the doctrine of the restitution, beyond

the mere name. But some two or three individuals, not only believed "with the heart"—but when a strong religious effort was made by the Baptist congregation—they were found abundantly competent to speak in vindication of divine truth. The subject thus introduced, during a season of excitement in an opposing sect, became one of general and absorbing interest; and in a few months—without preaching, in a single instance—without denominational books, save the Bible—without human aid, except that of conversation and exhortation—but under the blessing of God, a large and respectable Universalist society was gathered and duly organized.

In the course of the fall, a committee of the society requested the Rev. S. Jones—the only preacher of the order, whom they had ever heard—to visit and spend at least a few days, in preaching to them the Gospel of the kingdom. From some cause, it was not convenient for him to do so; and I was desired to make the journey as his substitute. I accordingly went the last week in December, and "abode with them" *six days*, including one

Sunday; and in that time delivered *eight* discourses to very attentive, and in most instances, large congregations. The pervading feeling and interest every where exhibited among the people at that time, bore stronger indications of that tone of feeling and purpose which we may suppose distinguished the primitive christians, than any similar movement which I have ever witnessed. There was no fanaticism and no pretension—no noise and no confusion—no midnight orgies and no religious dissipation. But a large proportion of the population of that, and the adjoining town of Ellisburgh, had been moved to think much and earnestly, but calmly and soberly, on the subject of christian truth, and its great importance to mankind; and many—very many embraced the doctrine of Universal salvation. And not only many of the youth favored or adopted that doctrine, but in some instances converts to the truth were made from opposing sects—before a single sermon was preached to the society by a minister of the reconciliation. Such was the religious movement in Henderson,

The Genesee Branch Association met this year in Pittsford, Ontario (now Monroe) county, and as usual, enjoyed an interesting and encouraging session. These public anniversary meetings were always pleasant. It was on these occasions, that ministers, who had seldom met a fellow-laborer during the year, came together to talk of their labors, and trials, and successes, to renew their friendships, and form new ones—to counsel each other to draw out opinions on various subjects, and if it might be, to derive new reasons for exertion. And it is not a little gratifying to observe, how easily they drew encouragement from every favorable incident—and that too, under circumstances far more calculated to oppress the feelings, than to cherish inspiring hopes. And well do we remember, the deep and abiding influence upon our own mind, produced by these annual meetings, when there was not a dozen societies of the denomination in the state. There were no fanatics among the preachers, and of course no pretenders to inspiration; but nevertheless, we all *predicted* the great and rapid progress of

the truth. And nothing could extinguish this hope—Congregations might be gathered in different places, only to disperse and disappoint expectation. But as often, new places were sought and found, and new zeal inspired by new encouragement. Thus passed year after year, and session after session of the Association—until faith became sight, and anticipation ended in reality, and Universalists were a numerous and wide-spread denomination.

The societies represented in this session, reported a state of as general prosperity, as a knowledge of their circumstances could authorize any one to hope. Some of them enjoyed regular preaching a part of the sabbaths—others relied on the occasional visits of itinerating clergymen—and others still, had no established regulations respecting public worship. The society in Pittsford, had a resident preacher, (Mr. T. Billinghamst,) but he had now nearly withdrawn from the labors of the ministry in consequence of some nervous affection—a species of paralysis, which disqualified him to bear the labor and excitement of preaching. The Society however,

was seldom destitute of regular services a portion of the time; and was firm and moderately zealous in the cause of truth.

One new Society—The first Universalist society in Henrietta, was received into fellowship, at this session of the Branch Association. The numbers and strength of this young family of believers, were not reported; but it is probable, that they were quite equal to most of the recent organizations of the time. And from several circumstances, there is reason to infer that like the society in Pittsford, though suffering occasional reverses, and for years in succession making no visible progress, it never absolutely lost its identity. It has at least, generally claimed a name to live, though it has not always, nor regularly sustained preaching. Whatever it has done to advance the knowledge and influence of the Gospel, has been done incidentally, and from its own intrinsic vitality. For like many other of the earlier societies of the order, it has received very little positive aid from the influence of the ministry. And if there is anything remarkable in the case, it

is in this—that a religious society can sustain itself during a period of nearly *thirty years*, without a Meeting house, and generally without a preacher, or a regular meeting.

In regard to the matter of church-building however, it can hardly be considered impolitic or charged to the account of negligence, in all cases, that some societies omitted to erect houses of worship. Not a few of the earlier structures of the kind, are not only placed where they ought not to be, but were apparently constructed for any other purpose rather than the convenience or comfort of worshipping congregations. In the newly settled portions of the state, Societies usually wanted the ability to furnish themselves with a church, But when they became able and sufficiently numerous to delay as many have done, has been to deprive themselves, their families and the public, of a religious home of their choice, and greatly retarded the progress of divine truth.

It was quite common for the individual members of Universalist societies, while they

were too few or feeble to erect a church of their own, to aid to the extent of their means, some other denomination in the erection of a meeting house. And this was almost always done with a *verbal* understanding, that when not wanted for the actual use of the nominal owners, such church should be free to Universalists. The result has usually been, that the occupancy of these houses has been *denied* to Universalists, without whose aid, they could not in many instances, have been erected. In this way, Universalists exhausted their means, and weakened their own energies; and proportionally encouraged, aided and strengthened their enemies. And there is reason to believe, that the Universalist society in Henrietta, is at this day, suffering the legitimate consequences of helping to take care of the religious interests of other sects, to the palpable neglect of their own.

But the evils of this course of procedure, do not end with the misapplication of a few dollars, more or less. It has thrown *thousands* of families, who by every principle of moral propriety should at this moment have

been identified with the cause of Universalism, into the arms of opposing sects. And it has done this by the operations of a double influence—by neglecting to provide the means of suitable religious instruction, and by the real, or at least apparent apathy to the true interests of the doctrine professed. Parents, who aid those of opposite opinions, to establish and sustain themselves, to the manifest neglect or disadvantage of their own—unintentionally no doubt, encourage their families to identify themselves with any sect except that, to which under other circumstances, they were naturally and even religiously inclined.

Again in many instances, where by going forward, Universalists might have been the leading denomination in the place and vicinity—they have waited, 'till some more energetic and far-seeing sect took possession of the field, built a church and won the congregation. The few true hearted Universalists who had thus outlived their wisdom, having found when too late for remedy; that they had forfeited the public sympathy and con-

fidence, contented themselves with folding their arms in despair, and doing nothing for themselves—or others, for ever after.

As one among many similar instances, I refer to a large and respectable congregation in the shire town of one of the populous counties of central N. Y. It was the subject of general remark, that this Universalist congregation embodied as much wealth, and more talent and influence, than any other in the village—but they did not feel quite able, and were not quite ready to build, and thought they might be both able and willing after a little delay. And during that *delay*, a small Episcopal society was formed which went directly to work—bought the lot on which, or near which, the Universalists had *talked* of building—called on every body for help—built a splendid church—and Universalism took wings and removed to another part of the town.

At this session of the Association, Mr. Pitt Morse received a Letter of Fellowship, as a Minister of the reconciliation. He was al-

ready favorably known to the friends in that vicinity, and especially to the excellent and discriminating Mr. Billinghamurst, and the society in Pittsford: and high expectations were entertained of his talents and usefulness. Nor has this early confidence of the friends of his youth, been disappointed. As a man, a christian, and a minister, he has through long years of unremitted toil and patient endurance served his divine Master with exemplary fidelity; and done honor to the ministry and to the cause to which that ministry was devoted. He was one of the few, who from the first perceived the necessity of an elevated ministry; and set the example of personal efforts for the attainment of that object. Above all else he desired to know and to feel, that Universalist preachers were above reproach. He could tolerate involuntary ignorance, and even apologise for eccentricities that he could not approve—but for vice or chicanery he had no mercy or indulgence. And while he was himself governed by well-established principles, it was his constant aim to render the denomination respectable through

the instrumentality of a simple and exalted moral virtue. Neither his personal friendship, nor his sympathy ever screened the perpetrator of wrong from his keen rebuke, nor did numbers or opposition prevent the expression of his honest convictions. And if he ever raised up enemies, their hostility would be provoked by his uncompromising determination to maintain his own standard of right. His decision of character, his cool and well informed judgement, and his steady perseverance, have given him a weight of influence that has long been felt, and secured for him, a reputation which few have attained. With a feeble constitution, he has performed an immense amount of mental and physical labor, and lived to enjoy the consciousness that the sacrifices which he has made and the services he has rendered, have neither been in vain nor unappreciated. His name and his ministry have been inseparably connected with Universalism in Central and Western N. Y. for a period of nearly thirty years.

Mr. Morse commenced his public ministry as all men should—with the use of full and

carefully written *notes*. But he became at an early period, what is denominated. an *extempore* preacher—that is, he delivered his discourses without notes. In early life, he spoke with great apparent ease and fluency; and with much greater rapidity, than in later years. He always avoided finery in a sermon, as alike out of place and out of character; but at the same time, took unwearied pains to have his phraseology correct and well chosen. And few things gave him more pain, than to hear a preacher utter grave and elevating truths in gross and ill assorted language; or use low and vulgar imagery in the illustration of sacred subjects. His attention to refinement of language, has however, undoubtedly tended to diminish the fervor and animation of his delivery, and his most valuable discourses have wanted the power that was exerted by his earlier and less finished productions.

During this session, the Association relieved itself of the public reproach which it had incurred, in consequence of the unministerial conduct of a certain Dr. Ellis, who had been

for some time past, itinerating within its jurisdiction. This man had by some unaccountable means, obtained the fellowship of the Northern Association—then the only one in the state of Vermont; and which, before he appeared in New York, had been withdrawn. But having as a matter of course, his Letter of Fellowship still in possession, he availed himself of it as a valid introduction to societies and believers of the order, wherever he chanced to travel. None questioned the authority there given to his ministry; but many doubted the propriety of sending out a man of his general characteristics, under the sanction of an ecclesiastical body. Time however, that assists to regulate, as well as develope human affairs, finally brought the whole truth to light; and the council at this session adopted and published the 17th minute of the Western Association, as follows:

“Whereas, Dr. Joseph H. Ellis has been for certain reasons, expelled from the fellowship of the Northern Association in Vermont and contrary to the rules of the order, has taken an active part in a session of the Gene-

see Branch of the Western Association, thereby imposing upon the whole body—this is therefore to give notice, that said J. H. Ellis, stands as a rejected member, to prevent further difficulties.”

The remark has been made before, but may without apology, be made again—that few things in the conduct of any class of men, is more admirable, than the utter disregard of all pecuniary considerations for which the early preachers of Universalism were generally distinguished. Who can doubt, that such men as Crandall, Morse, and many others, would have succeeded in any secular business to which they might have devoted their talents? or that they would have received, a much more ample and sure temporal reward of their enterprise and toil, than they ever derived from their ministry? At the time, and for years after these gentlemen commenced preaching, there were not half a dozen societies in the state, that did, or could, raise more than one or two hundred dollars per year, for the support of a clergymen. All that he realized more than that small sum,

was drawn from his own manual labor, or from some other and perhaps distant congregation. Besides, such was the irregular and uncertain manner in which the pecuniary affairs of societies were managed, that of the amount annually subscribed for sustaining public worship, more or less was never collected, and the loss generally fell upon the clergyman. With all this in full view—with a life of unmitigated labor, of privation and poverty before him—with the certainty of the contempt and hatred of the great body of influential christians—the inspiring motives to the adoption of such a profession, could have nothing to do with personal interest or popular applause. The daily wages of the humblest laborer, afforded higher pecuniary inducements, than were furnished by the Universalist ministry; and very few of equally correct habits and careful economy have found it more difficult to provide food and raiment for themselves and families, than Universalist clergymen. We know instances, and not a few of them, in which good and talented ministers have endured privations that the

world never suspected; and struggled with forms of destitution and suffering, the relation of which would not at this day be believed.

And while these labors and trials were borne without a murmur, without a thought of abandoning the ministry, and without any immediate prospect of better times, it was not unusual for them to be reproached by the imputation of worldly mindedness! They were accused of seeking under cover of their profession, a life of ease—of aspiring after notoriety—or hypocritically aiming at the destruction of all existing and established religious opinions and religious institutions. As if all the usual motives that govern human conduct, had ceased to be influential upon a class of men, who though making few pretensions to refinement, were neither deficient in common sense, nor common honesty. Those who knew any thing of the matter, well knew, that so far from seeking or enjoying a life of indolence, they were as a class, hard working men. If notoriety had been their object, the Universalist ministry was certainly not the field for its attainment; especially as it was

admitted on all hands, that they might have held a distinguished rank in the ministry of any other denomination. That they sincerely wished to overthrow the existing orthodoxy need not be denied; but it was for the purpose of reforming the church, and giving it a more rational theology, and a more pure and heavenly morality.

In the fall of this year, (1819,) an incident occurred at the Oneida Factory village, near Whitesboro, so characteristic of the spirit and spleen of the enemies of Universalism, that we present it to the reader. It was a season of some little religious interest and excitement, principally under the ministry of the Baptists and Presbyterians. And among the subjects of the awakening, were the two daughters of a friend belonging to the society in New Hartford, and who was the only Universalist in the village where he resided. At a very early hour one morning, I received a call from him, and was surprised to hear him say that he had walked four miles for the purpose of asking me a single question. He then put the following case.

"Suppose you had a family of grown up sons and daughters, who knew and respected your opinions—and that in your absence a clergyman of some opposing sect, should visit your family, and in the course of conversation should say without any qualification, that Universalists were the *drunkards* and *gamblers* of the community—what would you do?"

Answer—"I would require that man to meet me in presence of my family, and compel him to prove his assertion, or to bear the imputation of uttering a malicious falsehood." He then informed me that the Baptist clergyman, Elder Galusha, had made the above assertion to his family; and that he thought it due to himself and to truth, to require an explanation. It was then arranged between us, that in case the Elder would fix on a time for making this family another visit, I should be notified.

Every thing succeeded to the satisfaction of the aggrieved man, and in due time I was notified to attend the meeting on a given evening. The time came, and the house was soon filled to its utmost capacity. At length the Elder arrived, and appeared to feel indig-

nant, and betrayed his vexation in a variety of ways. A couple of chairs had been reserved for us, against the wall, from which to the fire place, there was just room enough for a person to walk. When he entered, I rose and was introduced—instantly he seized his chair, moved it forward, and seated himself directly before me—thrusting his back almost into my face. This drew all eyes upon him; and after apparently cooling a little, he rose, took up his chair, and replaced it at my side.

Our host now proceeded to state the reasons for calling the meeting; and requested the elder to state whether he had, or had not, used the language ascribed to him. He admitted that he did employ those terms. And though evidently with some embarrassment, he still preferred to attempt his justification. He accordingly assumed, that Universalism was a monstrous error; and labored at considerable length to sustain his position by the quotation of the texts usually relied on to prove the doctrine of endless misery. Thence he concluded, that as all errors in moral science were necessarily corrupting—there-

fore Universalists were and must be immoral people. This he said, was a legitimate inference; though he was willing to admit, that some Universalists were strictly moral—among whom, he had no doubt, was the gentleman in whose house we then were.

To this, I replied—That the passages quoted with a view to show that Universalism was false, did not prove so much; for the reasons that they admitted by a fair construction, of a different meaning than had been put upon them. And hence, that the inference which had been drawn, that Universalism was corrupting, did not follow; and that this had been conceded in the admission already made, that there were Universalists who were as good as their neighbors.

Here ended the conference. The result was decidedly favorable to Universalism; and thence-forward, that family became wholly attached to that doctrine.

1820.—The Western Association convened at Eaton, (Morrisville,) Madison county, on the first Wednesday in June, 1820, under cir-

cumstances more gratifying and encouraging, than had probably ever before been enjoyed from its organization. Thirteen clergymen, with about double that number of lay delegates were in attendance; and the reports of the state of the order, which these respectively furnished, inspired new hopes and new resolutions to perseverance. Toil, and sacrifice, and opposition, were by no means at an end; nor did any one, expect the intervention of divine providence in any signal instances. for the promotion of the cause of impartial grace. There was no pretensions to the marvellous—no aspirations that neither reason nor experience could approve and sanction. All were satisfied, that the ends of divine wisdom and goodness were, and always had been with occasional and necessary exceptions, carried on by ordinary instrumentalities; and that however humble and apparently inadequate those now employed might be, their work had been visibly owned and blessed. The results of preceding years of labor, suffering and patience, were beginning to develop themselves by various indications which

could not easily be mistaken. The ministry was improving; the condition of societies had visibly changed for the better; and the asperity of opposition if not absolutely diminished, was less gross and insulting. The tone of feeling inspired by these considerations, threw its peculiar influences over both preachers and people; and the public exercises were decidedly of a higher order and more impressive character, than on some former and similar occasions.

On the morning of the first day of the session, an incident occurred, that served to show the estimation in which the influence of Universalists was held by opposing sects, and the moral power which at that early day, the denomination exerted. The society in Eaton was by no means large, but embodied a due proportion of respectability and wealth. And as often happened, had no Meeting House of its own, individual members having contributed liberally towards building the Presbyterian Church. This was a plain, but convenient edifice; and sufficiently large to accommodate the congregation. As it was known,

that no very kind feelings were entertained by that particular denomination towards Universalists—the question had been asked, when the Association was requested to hold its session in that place, whether this church could probably be obtained for the public services? “O, yes,” the friends replied, “there was no doubt of it; it had been opened on various occasions when not wanted for the immediate use of the owners, and would be for the Association.”

The year passed away, and nothing was said or done respecting the use of the Church, until a week or two before the session of the Association—when a Methodist Quarterly meeting was appointed in the place, and application made for permission to occupy this identical Presbyterian Church. *It was denied,* although not wanted for the use of its owners; and the Methodists accommodated themselves, as best they could. This refusal was generally viewed, as it was no doubt intended, as the preliminary to a formal and unqualified denial of its use by the Universalists. It would furnish an apology for doing so on the ground of impartiality; since it would cer-

tainly look invidious, to grant to one denomination a favor which had just been denied to another, under the same general circumstances.

In this state of affairs, the Association convened in the principal room of the Court House, at an early hour in the morning, for the purpose of organizing and transacting some preliminary business; and as the Church, which was near, and still remained closed—the question was repeatedly asked by different persons who observed the state of things, whether it would be opened? The answer was given by the same individuals who had answered a year before, and with the same promptness and confidence—“certainly, the house will be opened, beyond all doubt.” But the time passed away—it was ten o’clock—many had already come in from neighboring towns—and the door remained shut and fastened. In the course of the next half hour, which was the time for commencing the public services, some hundreds of people had assembled about the steps of the house—still it remained unopened! Much anxiety was felt

and expressed, and various speculations indulged in a quiet way, respecting the probability of the house being opened *voluntarily*—and if not, what the result would be of *forcibly catering*. While this was passing, the hour of public worship came—when a boy deliberately made his way through the crowd, unlocked the door, and the congregation entered and took peaceable possession. Every thing within indicated the existence of a determined purpose not to open the house. The windows were *nailed down*; and every precaution taken to prevent the possibility of entering without palpable violence. But this resolution failed under the array of numbers and influence, and the projectors of the measure felt compelled to make a virtue of necessity; and so quietly yielding to the circumstances generously performed an unwilling act of courtesy—and opened the Church.

One very singular fact was exhibited, in connexion with the occupancy of Churches by Universalists. It will be recollected by the reader, that up to the time of which we have been speaking, they had very few

Churches of their own; and consequently, when they chanced to use one, it was by the courtesy of some other sect, or where they exercised an implied right. The fact alluded to, is this—that congregations of whatever denomination, controlling churches in which Universalists neither had, nor claimed to have any pecuniary interest, generally opened them with a respectable air of kindness—while on the contrary, we were not unfrequently denied the use of those, controlled by opposers, but in which our people owned shares. Of course, this remark does not apply to those instances in which Universalists were recognized as joint owners, or where written instruments guarantied the use of the house a given proportion of the time. My personal experience in this matter, has abundantly proved—that those Churches were opened with far greater frankness to which we had no claim but that of civility; than where the share of property and consequent right were beyond all reasonable doubt. Churches belonging to the Episcopalians were not only opened on request, but their use was some-

times voluntarily tendered; when it was notorious that it was contrary to the express rules of that denomination. Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists generally opened their Churches to us without hesitation. Indeed, I have never *but once*, been denied the privilege of using any church for a lecture, or funeral, when it was asked; although some have been more freely granted than others.

In May this year, (1820,) I had by request, made an appointment for an afternoon lecture on a week-day, at a church controlled and usually occupied by a small Baptist congregation in the southern part of the County of Oneida; and in which two of my friends owned stock to the amount of one quarter, or one third of the whole value of the building. One of these friends, I accompanied to the Church, a short time before the hour of service; as he wished to have the door open in season, and to provide for any little contingency. The key had always been kept at the house of a respectable Baptist, directly across the road—and finding the door locked, we stepped over, found the good man in his

garden, and he was asked for the key of the Church. His countenance instantly fell; and he betrayed all the embarrassment, that the consciousness of meanness and wrong inspire in a man unaccustomed to such condescensions, when he replied that the key was not in his possession. He admitted that he knew where the key was—regretted the circumstances which compelled him to appear unkind to a neighbor; and hoped he should not be pressed for further explanations.

All this was unlooked for. There was not the slightest visible reasons for such a procedure, except the sheer unmitigated malice of sectarianism. There was not any necessity of guarding against the introduction of Universalism, into the neighborhood; for there was no probability however remote, that any attempt to establish a meeting of the order, would ever be made, or could ever be desirable, in that place. Not one of the usual considerations, which it was notorious sometimes influenced the conduct of the opposers of Universalism, could be supposed to operate in this instance. The whole transaction need-

ed the poor apology of even a sinister motive. My friend quietly remarked, that it appeared very singular that the key should be removed; and that any disposition should be shown, to shut him out of the little church, on a week-day—and especially so, as he had contributed rather largely to its erection. The good Baptist, was disposed to be perfectly frank, and but for the mortification which he felt, would have been quite manly. He renewed the expression of his regret, at the circumstance, which he more than intimated he could not prevent—he admitted, that the Universalists had assisted liberally, in the erection of the Church; and should not wonder if they felt disobliged.

All this was very candid—but it did nothing towards opening the church; nor did it lessen the determination of my friend to enter it at all events. And using some pretty decisive expressions; he very deliberately began to estimate the expense of *a new door*. Seeing a few persons collected around the door, his spirit was up at once; and he determined to force it open. For this purpose, he drew

back a few paces, in order to throw himself against it with greater force. At this instant I seized his arm, and requested him to desist, as it would only make a bad matter worse; and that the occupancy of the house, was of no importance, as we could be equally well accommodated at a School house near by. All this was admitted, but it would not give what he was determined to have—the right of using what he considered his own property. Again and again, did he take his position, to batter down the door; and as often were the same general reasons urged to prevent his doing so—until at the earnest request of one or two other proprietors, he consented to withdraw to the School house.

What was particularly offensive in this transaction, was the utter incapacity of the Baptists, to occupy the church more than *once* or *twice* a month for their own public meetings. They were few and poor; but they promptly exhibited the spirit of certain of their predecessors, honored by the notice of our Savior—who would neither go in themselves, nor suffer others to enter the kingdom.

of heaven. I passed this building a few years afterwards *and it was filled with hay!*

Fellowship was granted at this session, to the Universalist society in Dryden, Cortland county, and to the churches in Oxford, Sangerfield and Vernon. These respectively, had, with a few others—not represented, been gathered during the preceding year. All these, with the probable exception of that in Oxford, Chenango county, survived but a few years, under their original organization. They either gave place to some other arrangement, or having no longer any motive for preserving their social identity, left their individual members to form new connexions with some neighboring society. But of these fragments, nothing was lost. They neither turned back to some other sect, nor ceased to profess and support the doctrine of the restitution. Other societies were gainers, by the acquisition of members; or new and more flourishing ones succeeded in more central and favorable locations.

The nominal increase of the number of societies, however, was by no means in pro-

portion to the actual advancement of the denomination. Indeed, this is probably always the case with all newly established and rising religious communities. It is certainly so as yet, with Universalists. While on the contrary, the more popular and influential sects, show an array of numbers more imposing than can be sustained by their actual strength. Thousands are nominally identified with them, from considerations of interest, fashion, or convenience, who hold no principles in common, and have no sympathy with them. Not one of these motives, could operate in swelling the aggregate number of Universalists. Many believed with them, in all the great and comforting truths of the Gospel; and still more, devoutly wished success to the cause of unbounded grace—who yet wanted the moral courage to identify themselves with its public professors. This silent, but certain influence which was working upon the public mind; the moderate and steady accumulation of numbers from year to year; and the more comprehensive views of the restitution, attained by individual members,

wherever an efficient organization had taken place—all directly and powerfully tended to establish permanently and build up the Universalist denomination. All this was effectually in operation, and to an extent never before known. The loss or gain of societies, as such, though it might affect the aggregate, gave no adequate idea of the actual state, or progress of Universalism.

As an illustration of the preceding conclusion, we give an instance out of many that might be adduced. The society in Hamilton, Madison county, was one of the original few, that organized the Western Association; and which at that time, did not comprise more than some twenty or thirty members. This society retained the same preacher, (Rev. N. Stacy,) who located in that town about fifteen years before. But within the last preceding three or four years, its numbers had nearly quadrupled; its communicants had in that time, increased from 30 or 40, to about 100; and from comparative weakness and inactivity, it had acquired strength; energy and influence. Its power had increased at least ten-

fold—not by the mere accumulation of numbers, but by its greater spiritual vitality and moral energy. Without these, it would have exerted but little more influence than during former years. If then, the statistics usually published, had alone been consulted, the real and far more important progress of the society, would not have been known or inferred. The mere barren fact would still appear, that there was a Universalist society in Hamilton; and this would have been all that the world could know respecting its condition or prospects. And here lay the great difference between the views of the preachers of Universalism and their religious opposers, respecting the progress of the denomination. The *latter* inferred its final overthrow from its little apparent growth—and the *former* derived constant encouragement, from facts, which their enemies had no eyes to see.

But whatever may have been the views entertained of the progress or power of Universalists; it is certain, that they, themselves, were becoming more sensible of their position, and of their capabilities of exerting a reason-

able proportion of public influence. This, under their peculiar circumstances, was a matter of far greater consequence, than might at first be supposed. For think of it as we may—those who persuade themselves that they can do little or nothing, are the last people in the world to accomplish much of any thing. And the consciousness that they were already exerting a power upon the moral condition of society, while it gave an additional impulse to their exertions, encouraged them to assume with more decision and effect, their true position among the different denominations.

The ministerial accessions at this meeting of the Association, were greater in proportion, than of societies. For it was then deemed a very competent supply, if there was an average of one clergyman to *three* or *four* congregations. Letters of Fellowship were granted to Salmon Adams, James Thomson and Arthur Field—young men, and two of them already known to the denomination. High hopes were entertained of the future usefulness of this trio of heralds of the restitution.

But as in many other similar instances, these hopes were turned into disappointment and sorrow. Mr. Thompson was a stranger to the denomination; and proved inefficient as a minister, and unworthy as a man. He was soon lost to us, and passed into oblivion. It is believed that he was a convert from the Methodists; in which connexion, it is not known what particular relation he sustained—whether preacher or layman.

Without attempting to account for the fact, still so it is—that we received fewer intelligent and useful men in proportion to the number, (for we had many,) from the Methodists, than from any other sect. And out of *twenty* clergyman from different denominations who came to us—and who became useless or worse than useless in a few years—*fourteen* of them were from the Methodists. And what is no less remarkable, every one of them, though coming to us with the full fellowship of their former connexion—had lost either his influence, or character, or both, before his conversion. The standing of these men, we could always ascertain *before* receiving them—but

it was seldom possible to learn any thing definite respecting their character or usefulness, until *after* we had given them fellowship. It was in this way, that Universalists incurred much odium and reproach. The ministry especially, suffered under the imputation of imbecility or corruption; when in truth, the charge lay at the door of those sects which wanted the courtesy or the candor, to give us the information which we sought. Such was the process, by which Universalists became a kind of "scape goat," for the clerical indiscretions and worthlessness of several other denominations.

Mr. Field was quite young, having only attained his majority; but he had during several years, given all the powers of his excellent mind, to the faith, love and study of Universalism. His situation was such as to render the doctrine which he so sincerely believed, peculiarly precious. From it, he drew that support and those consolations which enabled him to bear without complaint, a series of trials and abuses, that few good sons are called to endure. His parents were attached

to the Baptists; and with a passionate and unreasonable devotion to their favorite creed. sought by every means of annoyance and coercion that narrow mindedness and prejudice could devise or carry out, to deter him from the profession of Universalism, and especially from his purpose of entering its ministry. But his heart was in the cause, and his mind was fully made up, to live and to die, a minister of the reconciliation. And he waited with all a martyr's patience and firmness for the time, when he might assume the responsibility of acting for himself, independently of parental authority or control. In talents, prudence, integrity and devotion, he was all that his friends, or the denomination could desire. And such was the amiable and kind nature with which a benignant providence had blessed him—such his filial respect, and unalterable determination to render obedience to those that ruled over him, save in the exercise of the rights of conscience—that even his persecutors honored, if they did not love him the more for his nonconformity. And his resolution and unexceptionable deportment, so won

upon the affections and sympathies of his parents, that after some few months, both their hearts and their house were again opened to their devoted and stricken son.

Mr. Field possessed great energy of character, joined with a very delicate and feeble constitution; and his mental efforts, and unwearied physical labor, proved too great for his strength. In the course of little more than a year from the proper commencement of his ministry, he was seized with hæmorage of the lungs, which, though he occasionally ventured to preach, strictly put an end to his pulpit labors. He enjoyed weeks and even months of exemption from any very alarming indications of immediate peril; when without any apparent exciting cause, the disease would again exhibit itself, and usually under an aggravated form. Sensible of his situation, and that his days were numbered; he yielded with perfect submission and even cheerfulness, to the stern decree; and to use his own expression—'only lived to die. As the time approached that was to test the power of his faith in the conflict with death, he seemed to

rise with the occasion; and he evinced a strength of mind and a triumph of hope seldom equalled. His intellect was unclouded to the last; and his sun set only to be succeeded by a more bright and unending day. His life had been such as to leave little to regret, and for the future he had no fears. To him, life had lost its charms and death its sting; the grave was no longer a region of darkness, and the coming eternity brought no terrors to his mind. He felt that the filial tie that bound him to his Father and God, would not be dissolved by any change in his mode of being; and that as his Redeemer lived, he should also live forever. In this frame of mind, he gave directions for his funeral. The writer of this brief notice of him, was chosen to deliver a discourse, the bearers were selected and informed of their appointment; and every arrangement made even to the time of day for conducting the services, while he yet lived. And when he had thus finished his work; with his latest breath, uttering praises to God and imploring blessings on his family and friends, he calmly and peacefully passed

away to the bosom of his God. He was loved in life—and his early death was long and deeply mourned.

Mr. Adams was known as a faithful and earnest believer of the restitution, and an honorable and upright man. He was at the time, a practicing physician; and it is presumed, older by a few years, than either of the others who then entered the ministry with him. And from the nature of his profession, it was inferred that his education was above mediocrity. This was already becoming a matter of some interest and consideration. Few of the clergymen of the denomination in the state, had little more than the common school education of that period—and some of them, not even that. But it was beginning to be felt, that other things being equal, it was very desirable that preachers should be able to discourse without great violence to the English language; and at all events, that they should be as well educated as the generality of their hearers. When therefore, an individual entered the ministry with some few attainments deemed indispensable, higher hopes were en-

tertained of his future usefulness. Dr. Adams came to us, under these favorable circumstances.

To what particular causes it is owing that the expectations then entertained, have not been fully realized, we are unable to say. There is every reason to believe, that Dr. Adams has labored sincerely and with great devotion, for the promotion of the knowledge and influence of the Gospel. His labors have been unremitting, and as far as known, his life has been one of unexceptionable moral propriety. He has made continual sacrifices and endured untold privations for the cause of truth; still his ministry has languished, and has probably never yielded him a competent, or even comfortable support. How much of all this, may be imputed to a hesitancy in relying upon the ability and liberality of the denomination to sustain him, is uncertain. But in general it has so happened, that those who chose to rely principally upon their own resources, or upon some secondary pursuits for support—have been permitted to do so. In this way, societies have usually very clearly

expressed the opinion, whatever ministers may think of it, that one profession is quite as much as any man can usefully or successfully fill. Nor has the fact that their ministers were at times, obliged to resort to some temporary endeavors to sustain themselves, materially qualified their views on that subject. Such expedients were permitted from necessity—not from choice; and when the preacher persisted in carrying them on, it was taken for granted that his ministry was a secondary consideration.

Dr. Adams has employed much of his ministry, in the capacity of a pioneer. And although generally residing in the state of New York, he has not unfrequently pushed out into sections, where the doctrine of the restitution was not established, or where it was little known; and where of course, he must encounter peculiar difficulties and embarrassments. For some years past, he has resided principally in Chautauque Co., but it is believed without any formal engagement as a clergyman, preaching occasionally, and devoting himself more immediately to the practice of

medicine. In whatever situation, and wherever located it is believed, he has sustained a character above reproach; and still enjoys the confidence and respect of the denomination.

The habits of study, and preparation for the duties of the desk, materially affect the condition and usefulness of a clergyman; and none more, than the preachers of Universalism. Great changes have taken place in the tastes and circumstances of the community; and especially so, in those of our rapidly growing denomination. Its doctrines and general views have remained without material alteration; but in nearly all else, great and important changes have successively occurred. The tone of public services which prevailed twenty five years since, is no longer called for nor useful. The battle between Universalism and the prevailing orthodoxy, has been fought; and neither the public mind, nor the wants of the denomination demand the perpetual succession of strong doctrinal discourses. Such services, as carry out and enforce the moral and religious bearings, and influ-

ences of the doctrine of the restitution, have become more necessary and more useful. It has followed therefore, that however well qualified and competent any clergyman might be to sustain the cause, some twenty or thirty years since—if he has not himself progressed with the denomination—if he has not perceived that more, much more was required of him than formerly, and has not governed himself accordingly, his services will be less valued. The partial or total neglect of these things; a repugnance to modernize, is palpably the reason why so many of our earlier and able preachers have not sustained themselves. They have not kept up with the times, and with the advance of the denomination; and have literally fallen, “behind the age.”

At this session of Association; Mr. Pitt Morse received ordination as an Evangelist, that is—without charge of any particular congregation. He had received the Fellowship of the Genesee Branch Association, in the fall of the preceeding year. Though personally known to many members of the Council, still

few in central N. Y., had any knowledge of his talents as a preacher. The older clergymen were desirous of knowing more of his ability to sustain the pulpit, before granting the request for ordination. It was accordingly arranged, that he should preach the morning sermon on the following day. On these anniversary occasions, it was always intended to have the desk well sustained, especially on the second day; and this was so generally understood, that many persons made arrangements to attend on that day in preference to the preceeding. The chagrin and disappointment of many of the congregation on entering the house, was apparent and undisguised. Some uttered their indignation aloud—saying, “they had come miles to hear preaching, and behold there was a *boy* in the pulpit.” A few of the older preachers were in absolute terror, lest the service would result in failure. And these feelings and apprehensions were so pervading that for a time, few in the congregation ventured to look the young preacher steadily in the face. But the services commenced, the text was given out, and the sermon pro-

gressed. the usual silence indicated that the speaker received respectful attention, but it was still apparent that apprehension was not allayed; nor was it difficult to imagine, that the throbbing of hearts from sheer anxiety, could be heard throughout the congregation. After a few minutes however, the large auditory began to look up, and to breathe easier; the attention became more obvious, fixed, earnest, and finally intense. And strong men, and preachers of many years of trial and endurance became wholly absorbed, and unconscious of every thing save the sermon—but sat motionless, their eyes fixed upon the speaker, and weeping like children. Never was a congregation more happily disappointed. A total failure had been feared, and it had terminated in a triumph. Preachers and people were in absolute raptures; and from that moment the character and talents of the young minister, were effectually known to the denomination.

During the recess of the Association—that is, between the present and the last annual session, ordination by special council, had

been conferred on Messrs A. Vandenberg, J. S. Flagler, and A. Crandall. From the following circumstance, an idea may be formed of the whimsical taste which sometimes exists in connexion with good, and even great talents. At the ordination of Mr. Vandenberg, the discourse was delivered by Mr. E. Ferris, a sound thinker, and able minister; but withal, an eccentric mortal, who occasionally indulged his humor at the obvious hazard of the common rules of sermonizing.

He selected for his text, 2d. Kings 4: 38—*"Set on the great pot."* Almost any other man, might have been at a loss, to render this passage particularly applicable to such an occasion; but in his hands, no difficulty existed of that description. He saw without an intervening shadow, its immediate bearing upon the condition and duties of a minister of the gospel; and in his very plain and intelligible way, proceeded with an exposition of his views. He showed, that as it was a time of dearth, the prophet designed to adapt the *quantity* of provisions, to the aggravated wants of the company to be fed. And that as the

great pot implied the existence of at least one *little* one, it was apparent that this was insufficient for the occasion. Just so, said he, it is in the present condition of the religious world. There is a famine in the land—not of bread, nor of water, “but of hearing the word of the Lord:” and all the little pots of all the partialist sects, do not, and can not furnish a sufficiency of moral food. Set on then, the great pot of Universal Salvation. And if the cry comes up, that “there is death in the pot.” pour in the spirit and power of christian virtue and christian charity, and depend upon it men may safely eat, and live.

Having in this manner opened the field, he proceeded to particularize the vast superiority in the magnitude and importance of the views of Universalists, when compared with those of other denominations. Universalism was indeed a great pot; while partialism under all its names and forms, *belittled* every thing, and spoiled that little, in the *cooking*. It imparted but diminutive and unworthy notions of the Deity, and positively limited his attributes and perfections. It depressed and narrowed

christian hope, until the believer had *little* assurance of a blessed futurity; and in consequence, *little* peace and comfort in his religion. And it so circumscribed and contracted the plan of salvation; as ultimately to yield but *little* honor to Christ, and confer but *little* benefit on the moral world. Put on then, said he to the candidate—the great pot. Bring forth the fulness of the gospel; and feed men's souls with food, “of which, if a man eat, he shall live forever.” Let God be seen in his infinite grace—the Father and the friend of man; and through his gospel seeking the reformation and the happiness of all his moral offspring. Teach men that they can never think too well, nor hope too much, of their heavenly Father. Teach them to believe that all that Christ undertook, he will in due time accomplish; and that moral perfection and immortal happiness shall be the portion of all mankind. Set on the great pot—and God bless you.

Mr. Ferris delivered one of the discourses at this session of the Association, entirely characteristic—since it is quite probable that no

other man ever did, or even would, think of making a sermon from the same text. And yet, singular and even whimsical as were these selections, he generally succeeded in producing sermons of much more than ordinary power and ability. His sermons, unlike those of many others, bore the evidence of careful and mature, if not of chastened thought—his positions were usually well chosen and well sustained; and he was always master of his subject. And however odd the selection of the text might be, the discourse that followed, was delivered with all becoming gravity—and the congregation that smiled when the text was read, often wept under the sensible and manly appeals which he uttered in the course of the sermon.

On this occasion, he selected Zech. 8: 5. *"And the streets of the City shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof."* Childhood, he observed, might be regarded as a correct representation of innocence—and children playing, gave the idea of content and enjoyment. From this, he proceeded to consider the city alluded to in the text, as the

legitimate figure of the "holy city, New Jerusalem," or the gospel dispensation. The dwellers in this city, were therefore, first pure, and then happy. His discourse was consequently directed to the consideration of the processes by which the gospel effected the moral renovation and purity of mankind; and the certain felicity which would result to the individual and the race. And however obscure the connexion between the sermon and the text, the discourse was able and impressive; and few could rise from listening to it, without new aspirations and forming new resolutions to become good and happy.

The following incident is deemed worthy of insertion, on account of the sublime moral character which it exhibits; and the influence which Universalism exerted in its production. In September this year, (1820,) the writer, in company with Rev. P. Morse, made a journey into New England for the purpose of attending the "General Convention of Universalists," at Claremont, New Hampshire. In accordance with our plan, we visited and

spent a Sunday in Hudson, N. Y., at that time the nearest society except one, to our starting point at New Hartford in the county of Oneida, on the commonly travelled route. The reader, if acquainted with the region through which we travelled a distance of 130 miles, will readily estimate the changes that have since occurred throughout its whole extent, so far as Universalism is concerned. As we expected, the society in Hudson, was prospering under the efficient labors of Rev. D. Pickering; and we enjoyed a very pleasant interview with the congregation on Sunday, as well as a most gratifying visit with its excellent Pastor.

On Monday morning, we resumed our journey; and after proceeding some eight miles on the Hartford road—drew up to the door of a substantial brick mansion, for the purpose of obtaining some Peaches, which hung in tempting abundance on the trees, in the yard attached to the house. Mr. Morse knocked, and an elderly female, whose dialect proved her German origin, came to the door. Our business was made known; and she led the

way through the gate, which opened from the street, and within a very few feet of where I was in waiting. The peaches were obtained—compensation declined on the ground that we were strangers, and Mr. M. was about returning to the carriage—when he observed to the old lady, in her native dialect, that he supposed, she was German. She answered that she was; and in return asked, how he came to learn that language. He replied, for the purpose of reading the *Testament* in German. Then, said she, you are a *domine*—a preacher. Yes. She then asked his name, which was no sooner given, then she inquired, who was with him. On being informed, she rushed out through the gate and approached the carriage, talking as if to herself—half German, half English, with a rapidity and earnestness altogether beyond our powers of comprehension, and repeatedly exclaiming—“the Lord bless ye!”

In this strain, she proceeded to inform us, that she had previously learned from some source, that there were two Universalist preachers bearing our names; and that

on hearing them she was assured we were the persons. She laughed, and wept, and blessed God, and implored his benediction upon us. She said—"I have believed this glorious and blessed doctrine. these 30 years—yes, this poor old German woman all alone, has found this blessed truth in her German Bible." Her heart was full; and it might be truly said, that her faith enabled her to rejoice "with joy unspeakable and full of glory." She told us of her isolation from the world of believers around her, for so many years; of the trials, she endured, and of the hopes by which she had been sustained. And what an impressive lesson did she give us, and was constantly giving to the world, in the steadfastness of her faith. She had believed in the final restitution, more than *twenty five years* before it was preached in the city of Hudson, and several years before it was preached in the state, except a few discourses in the city of New York. But of this she had never heard; and the first knowledge that she ever received of the existence of a people of like precious faith, and who could sympa-

thize with her, was when the society was established in the city of Hudson, some four years previous. There is a moral grandeur in the exhibition of such integrity of soul, which secures our deference while it excites our admiration.

This "poor old German woman," as she was pleased to call herself, was the mother of one of the most respectable families in the county of Columbia. Her talents, moral courage, personal worth, and uncompromising fidelity to her principles—altogether constitute a character of which her descendants may justly be proud. May they profit by her example. The mere independence of soul, with which she maintained her principles during a quarter of a century without the encouragement of human sympathy, is worth more than an eternity of slavish conformity to prescriptive orthodoxy, or a selfish accommodation to opinions, which are acknowledged rather than believed.*

*This incident was published by the writer, several years since.

The Genesee Branch Association, held its session this year, (1820,) in the town of Henrietta, Monroe county, and transacted its ordinary business with great cordiality and unanimity. One of the measures which it adopted on this occasion, implies an entire reorganization—or, that some important changes were deemed necessary in the regulations of this branch, for the sake of more general uniformity in the mode of proceeding. This body had already existed for some seven years, during which it had exercised all the common powers of other Associations of the order. It had granted Fellowship, or withdrawn the same according as circumstances demanded; and both itself and its doings, had been duly recognized and sanctioned by the ecclesiastical bodies of the denomination. How it should happen, that it should at this late day, adopt a profession of faith, and an entire plan or constitution of government, does not appear. It seems incredible, that its business should have been regularly transacted without either of these, during a period of nearly seven years. But from whatever

cause, the "Profession of Belief, and Plan or Constitution of Government," of the Western Association, were adopted at this session, by the Genesee Branch; and the same ordered published in pamphlet form, for general distribution.

The current method of making known the proceedings of our public bodies, was by issuing a cheap pamphlet—usually an edition of 500 copies; for as yet, we had no denominational paper, the circulation of which in the region of the Associations, would be of any avail for giving general information. It became therefore, a standing rule of the Associations, to provide for the publication of their minutes; which was usually done, by collections made in the respective societies and transmitted by their delegates. And these were precious documents; and they were read and carefully preserved for future reference. They were sent in small parcels to the resident clergymen, or clerks of societies; and by them distributed among the respective congregations. And as only a small proportion of the believers could obtain them, they were

loaned and passed from house to house, and were returned to the original proprietor, with as much care as would have been taken with the most important publication in the land. They were of great importance to the denomination; as they constituted the only statistics on which unqualified reliance could be placed. These humble missiles enabled us, by comparing the gain or loss noted at a given time, with the number at any previous period—to form a tolerably correct estimate of our progress and real strength. Above and beyond all this, there was an interest *felt* in the affairs of the denomination, which it will be difficult for many at this day, to understand; and matters then deemed of great and even vital consequence, would now only excite wonder that they were ever so regarded. A better idea of these feelings and the reasons for them, will be derived from considering how momentous were the movements and successes of the christians during the age of the Apostles, when compared with similar facts and events after the Empire became christian.

The indications of progress within the limits

of the Association, were unusually flattering. The ministry was exempt from reproach; established congregations were increasing in numbers and improving in condition; new societies were rising up and embodying in various sections of the country; and the business of the session was transacted in the utmost harmony and peace. Three new societies—those in Ogden, Parma, Murray, and Gates, applied for, and received the Fellowship of the Association. Two of these, and probably all three, have retained their identity down to the present time. It should be recollected, that a society which has sustained itself from 1820, to 1847, has accomplished a work, and evinced an energy of character, of which those of recent organization can have but an imperfect idea. The country was comparatively a wilderness; the forests of uncounted ages still stood undisturbed on the ground now occupied by large and flourishing towns; and the population, like every thing around, was successively changing both its place and condition. These considerations should be added to all the ordinary contingences, that

usually occur, to prevent the progress, or work the dissolution of religious societies.

It is an established truth, that there exists in all infant denominations of christians, more affection and kindness, and greater unanimity of action, than after they become numerous and powerful. The early converts to christianity, were pre-eminently distinguished for their ardent brotherly affection; and it was so remarkable in that age, that the heathens exclaimed—"See how these christians love one another!" And in all subsequent ages of the church, it has been customary to refer to this trait in the character of the first christians, as the standard of true discipleship. And this is doubtless correct—but unfortunately, it has rarely, if ever been practically illustrated, by any christian community. after becoming numerous and exerting a wide influence. The changes of physical condition, frequently affect the moral feelings and conduct of sensible and good men. Their position, their relations and their responsibilities, all become changed; and the intimate causes which influenced the conduct and the feelings under other

circumstances, relax in their intensity and force. It is not our meaning, that the fraternal feeling is wholly lost, or that the duty of brotherly kindness is entirely overlooked, but rather that they are modified, and perhaps contracted within a much narrower circle.

There were many reasons why the early christians should be drawn to each other in the closest intimacy, and by all the better sympathies of the human heart. Shut out by principle from all other society; they were all the world to each other. The world around had no sympathy, no respect, no kindness for them; and had too little regard for their persons or their religion to express any. Policy or prejudice steeled every heart, and armed every hand against them. By consequence their mutual wants, and privations, and sufferings, not only levelled all the ordinary distinctions between the individuals of different social conditions, but forced them to cling to each other for support, comfort, and encouragement. The interests, the passions, and the prejudices common to man, were borne down and forgotten under the over-

whelming pressure of the circumstances by which they were surrounded. They lived only for their religion and for each other; and they loved one another with a depth and intensity of feeling, without any parallel in human history. But as christianity wrought its way, and overcame prejudices, spread its general influences, and neutralized the power and the purpose of opposition—much of that peculiar affection, for which the first disciples were so distinguished, ceased to be visible. The christian felt and acted too much like other men; and his passions, and interests, and his consciousness of position, came forth to perform their appropriate work—tempered and mitigated more or less by the influence of the gospel, but still to a qualified extent. the things that they always were.

Without indulging in a train of speculations on the recurrence of the same general facts, as successive sects have risen to fulfil their mission; it will suffice to observe, that Universalists have furnished another illustration of the feelings of brotherhood, which their own weakness and the power and oppressions

of others are so well calculated to inspire. During many years, disagreements of any kind, seldom occurred. The one great object—the promotion of the gospel, was kept steadily in view, and all other things were regarded as of secondary moment. In several minor points of doctrine, they *agreed to disagree*; in matters of expediency, opinions were frankly expressed, and the majority as frankly and promptly decided which it approved. But no offence was given or taken, when it happened that the views of an individual were rejected. Among the preachers, the utmost harmony prevailed; there were no jealousies, no intriguing, no resentments and defamation. Success made no one ostentatious; and failure never provoked envy of the more fortunate. They loved the cause for its own sake, and humbly thanked God, that his own work was carried on by approved instrumentalities, whether by themselves or others. The Associations were occasionally called to the discharge of painful duties; but there were no canvassings for a vote, no unnecessary scrutiny into the conduct of delinquents, and no

degradation inflicted beyond the mere withdrawal of fellowship. The wrongdoer though blamed and chastened, was pitied; and while justice rendered inflictions necessary, humanity in the administrators wept over a fallen brother. Such was primitive Universalism in the state of New York.

1821.—It has been already remarked, that a most extraordinary *revival of religion*, had occurred in the town of Henderson, Jefferson county; resulting, without the intervention of ministerial labor, in the establishment of Universalism in that place, and the organization of a large and respectable society of the order. In the fall of 1820, Mr. Pitt Morse visited, and at once settled with this society. He was young, ardent, and competent to sustain the cause of truth in any emergency. But he was alone. For although there were one or two preachers in the county, their locations were too distant from his, to admit of any very intimate intercourse, or aid and support to each other. Opposition was as reckless and daring, as ignorance of the doctrine

of the restitution, and profound confidence in the popular theology could render it. And although the ministers of the dominant sects, Baptists and Methodists, had exercised some little forbearance and courtesy towards the society while destitute of a preacher; now that they had employed one of acknowledged talents, a new course of measures was adopted, and more open and vindictive hostility manifested.

The violence and dogmatism with which Universalism and its ministers were assailed, during the winter of 1820—21, resulted in arrangements for a public oral debate between Mr. Morse and Mr. Evarts, then presiding Elder in the Black River Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. This took place on the first of May, 1821, at the Church in Bellville, in the town of Ellisburg. Mr. Evarts was by some years the senior of Mr. Morse—was besides, a man of some reputation as a clergyman, which was implied by his position—could and did bring an array of Methodist ministers to sustain and assist him, and to overawe his young antagonist by the

double weight of numbers and the influence of public sentiment. It was arranged, that the debate should open at 9 o'clock, on each successive morning during its continuance—that it should continue till noon, when an intermission of one hour should follow—that it should be renewed at one o'clock, in the afternoon and continue till four, when it should adjourn over 'till the next morning—and so on from day to day, until it should finally close. The respective parties were alternately to occupy a given number of minutes, during which they were not to be interrupted—were to treat each other with respect and civility—and were to settle all arguments under the propositions in debate, by an appeal to the scriptures. The main proposition was, in substance—whether the scriptures taught the final holiness and happiness of all men, or that some men would be endlessly miserable.

The debate opened on the morning of the first day, with prayer, by one of the Methodist clergymen in attendance, in presence of a numerous auditory, that filled every part of the church. Mr. Evarts then stepped for-

ward, and before ascending the pulpit steps—kneeled and remained a few moments in *silent* if not *secret* prayer—before the whole congregation. This ostentation of devotion, carried our minds back to the time when his predecessors in religious pretensions, thanked God that they were not like other men. God forbid, that we should be understood, as offering any objection to prayer. But we must be permitted to utter our protest, against the observance of the form, under circumstances so directly and almost exclusively calculated to excite the belief—that it is done “to be seen of men.”

It were worse than useless, to attempt to give the particular arguments, proofs, assertions and assumptions, which occurred in an oral discussion of almost an entire *week*. Those who have read the heavy volumes that give in detail the sayings and doings on similar occasions, or have otherwise given much attention to the subject; very well know that much irrelevant matter is usually introduced, that not a few sarcasms are uttered,—jokes perpetrated,—some ill nature excited, and ma-

ny things said in sorry keeping with the gravity and importance of the subject. In this instance, it may be said, that the discussion was conducted with about the usual amount of decorum on such occasions; and it is particularly due to Mr. Morse, to state, that though at times compelled to utter strong language and sharp rebuke, he never lost sight of the dignity of the subject nor of his own self-respect.

The arguments and proofs commonly relied on, in support of the doctrine of endless misery, were presented in every form of which the subject seemed to admit. The supposed scriptural, and all other objections that either custom or prejudice had sanctioned or could urge against the doctrine of the restitution, were presented by Mr. Evarts, with persevering and characteristic zeal. And both the faith and morality of Universalists, were assailed, as equally destructive of individual peace and public safety. On the other hand, Mr. Morse labored with very obvious success to repel the aspersions cast upon the denomination—to remove the objections to the faith

of Universalism—and successfully threw back upon his opponent, the charge of maintaining dogmas, alike dishonorable to God and unworthy of the faith and confidence of sensible men. Having reached his position, he proceeded to argue from various premises the necessity and the consequent certainty of the final holiness and happiness of all men, sustaining his deductions by an array of Scriptural proofs, which attracted the most intense regard of the congregation, and evidently excited the surprise of his antagonist.

Thus the discussion progressed from day to day, until Friday noon, when Mr. Evarts refused to adjourn for the accustomed intermission of an hour. His Methodist friends sustained him; and the Universalists, and more liberal part of the auditory, sustained Mr. Morse in preserving inviolate the rules of procedure originally adopted. The Methodists were accordingly left to carry on the debate as best they might, during the usual intermission. And at the close of the hour, when the Universalists returned to the house, behold, the bird had flown! During the ab-

sence of the Universalists, Mr. Evarts had called a vote from his friends, to the amount that Universalism had been triumphantly refuted and exploded; on which he declared the debate closed, when they immediately left the house. The Universalists notwithstanding this resolution, were left in quiet possession of the field of conflict; and after consultation, it was deemed proper to close the labors of the occasion with a discourse. And the writer of this, delivered a sermon from 2d. Sam. 23; 3 and 4 vs.

On the afternoon of the first day of the debate, an incident occurred which serves to show the method by which, in the absence of other means, the opposers of Universalism, would prevent the public from hearing the arguments and proofs adduced in its support. Among the persons in the gallery, and as near the pulpit as the seats would permit, was seated a genuine son of Methodism, whose noisy aspirations remained in profound quiet, while Mr. Evarts was speaking—but which successively and uniformly broke forth in groans so strong and protracted as to put all

other sounds to flight, the moment that Mr. Morse began to speak. After observing that these paroxysms occurred at regular intervals, and only when Mr. Morse speaking, I suggested to him the propriety of rebuking and silencing the offender. This he deemed problematical; as he recognized the man and presumed that it would be thought an attempt to repress the influence of the spirit of the Lord. Having satisfied myself that he was actuated by a very different spirit—the moment he again commenced groaning, I fixed a steady look upon him, and after fairly looking him down, asked whether he was ill? adding that if he was, he should be taken to the public house, as it was no place there for a sick man. This was effectual, and the poor fellow remained quiet during the remainder of that day, and several days afterwards.

The following incident will serve to show the *liberty* sometimes taken in a Universalist meeting by the hearer; as well as give an idea of the *doctrinal character* of a large proportion of the denominational sermons of the

time. There was never amongst us, any of the mere extravagance, common to some other sects; and no unmeaning exclamations were ever uttered in our meetings, for producing an effect. But when the preacher was interrupted it was generally for the solid purpose of saying something that not only had a meaning, but which was every way intelligible to the congregation.

In the winter of 1821, the writer exchanged pulpit services with the Rev. W. Underwood, who preached a part of the sabbaths, at the village of Waterville, Oneida county, where a few believers had associated for the purpose of partaking the ordinances of the christian church. Their meetings were held in the large room of a public house, and which had been fitted up as a Masonic Hall. As usual in rooms of that description, a seat—or rather bench extended around three sides of the room; and when the occasion required, seats were placed across in front of the rostrum or chair, and thus some 200 persons could be accommodated. On entering the room, I noticed a box about a foot square, on one of the

side seats, and some *thirty feet* from the rostrum. As the room was not filled in the morning, the box was suffered to remain. But in the afternoon, the congregation was larger, and I observed a tall man deliberately take his seat on that box. This brought him into full view from my position; for like king Saul, from "his shoulders and upwards," he appeared above the heads of the congregation.

The services proceeded in due course; and the attention of the auditory was close and earnest. The discourse, as was then usual, especially on occasions in which a more than ordinary number of strangers were present—was decidedly doctrinal. The consistency of the great doctrine of the final reconciliation and happiness of all men, with the acknowledged perfections of God, was argued. Its agreement with the clearly revealed purpose of the Deity, in sending his son into the world, was shown; and its accordance with the teachings of the Apostles and the moral wants and capabilities of mankind, was argued and proved. I then distinctly put the

questions, "Do you believe this?" Quick as thought, the long muscular arm of the tall man on the box, was extended, and he deliberately responded in a clear and full voice—"Yes, God knows I believe it, with all my heart."

None, of course, expected an audible answer to my question—but the effect was instantaneous and overwhelming. Some smiled and wept; and every countenance brightened up, as if newly inspired with hope and joy. This excellent man was a recent convert from the Baptists; and without being fanatical, he could not let so favorable an opportunity pass, without the public avowal of his faith in those great truths which inspired his hopes and rejoiced his heart. He lived a number of years, to honor the profession which he had so singularly made; and died steadfast in the faith of a world's salvation. Perceiving that his days were numbered, he expressed, as among his last earthly wishes, the desire that I should attend and deliver a discourse at his funeral. Thus evincing in death, his unwavering confidence in those truths, the efficacy of which

he had fully tested in life. So live, and so die, the sincere in faith and the upright in practice.

The indications of permanent prosperity, were decidedly more visible this year, (1821, than at any former session of the Association. The faith and principles of the great doctrine of the restitution, had manifestly taken deep root, and were sending forth branches in every direction; and a vigorous and substantial growth in all that seemed likely to advance the true interests of the denomination, was apparent in all its departments. New, and comparatively strong societies, were organizing—houses of public worship were being erected—good and approved men were coming forward to the work of the ministry—and peace and moderate prosperity generally prevailed. It was indeed a time of glorious promise—not of exemption from toil, and trial, and effort—but of advancement and final triumph. No words can convey an adequate idea, of the feelings of hope and confidence inspired by the reception of *four* new minis-

ters, and *six* societies into fellowship. And when it is recollected, that there were but *three* churches in the state, (those of New Hartford, Hudson and Greenfield,) which the denomination could call its own—it may well be supposed, that the erection of *three* more in favorable locations in a single summer, was matter of pride and congratulation.

Societies located in the following named places, were received into the fellowship of the Association, viz. Henderson and Brownville, in Jefferson county, Smyrna and Norwich, in Chenango county, Otsego, in Otsego county, and Auburn, in the county of Cayuga. All these were located in or near, some considerable village, and at points well calculated to exert an important influence over the public mind in their respective vicinities.—In the progress of events, and the multiplied changes which have occurred in consequence of the surprising increase of population, and the growth of new and flourishing towns, throughout the region in which these societies are situated, some of them may have taken new centres—but it is believed that all ex-

cept one, have maintained their identity. And some of these—particularly that in Auburn, are at the present time, among the most prosperous, respectable and influential of any in the state, or the Union.

In the former volume of these Sketches, we had occasion to advert to the influence, which mere *location* has upon the condition and success of a religious society. It is quite probable that every denomination in this vast country, has suffered more or less from inattention to this particular subject—and unfortunately, Universalists come in for a full proportion of the evils from this source. In far too many instances, they as well as others, have aimed at the convenience of the members of the congregation, without much apparent regard to the public, on whose pleasure nearly every thing depended. It has accordingly followed, that a meeting was established, and a church erected—not in the most central or thickly populated place, and consequently where these should be—but at the junction or crossing of roads, however lonely the spot, or distant from the place of general

concourse. We know of Episcopal, Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist and Universalist Churches, now standing in places where strangers are surprised to find them; and where, it is scarcely less wonderful, in the estimation of those who used their influence and contributed their means, to place them. A camp-meeting or a public execution may be taken—no matter where, and there are always to be found enough of those, who love novelty, excitement, or frolic, to make up a throng. But the institution of public worship in any given place, and by any sect, must commend itself to public attention and favor, by far other considerations. It must be accessible, and conveniently near, or the talents of an angel would be thrown away in fruitless efforts to subserve the interests of divine truth.

At this session of the Association, which was held in Bainbridge, Chenango county, Letters of Fellowship were granted to Job Potter, Oliver Ackley, Geo. B. Lisher and S. A. Skeel, as ministers of Universal grace. Messrs. Potter and Ackley, were members of the society in Hamilton of which the indefat-

igable Mr. N. Stacy was pastor. Their moral, social and mental worth, were consequently known and relied on, and they have proved themselves to be true men. They have sustained unsullied reputations, under all the vicissitudes of outward fortune, and while vindicating a cause that provoked the opposition and the hate of the religious world, have still secured and enjoyed the respect of all who knew them. They have labored long and faithfully in building up and sustaining the cause of divine truth among men, have never shrunk from toil or privation, nor shuned to declare "the whole counsel of God;" and they have consequently received from the denomination at all times—the praise of well-doing.

Mr. Lister was a young man of quick and active, rather than strong or sound talents; and though by no means an idle man, he was disposed to satisfy himself and others with showy, rather than substantial attainments. He had received but a very small measure of common school education; and without any decided and persevering efforts at self improvement, made the best possible use of the

little that he possessed. His speaking talents were of a high order; and although he could never sit down to the deliberate study of a sermon, still, he possessed that peculiar species of intuition which enabled him to make usually, a creditable discourse. The deficiency of thought, or arrangement, was generally atoned for, by the fervor and power of the delivery.—Few men in the denomination, have been more successful in the very commencement of their ministerial labors; and none have been more ambitious and aspiring. No man was more conscious of his peculiar abilities, than himself; and the injudicious flattery of his friends, rendered him vain, capacious and dogmatical. He seems to have been one of those singularly constituted men, who can bear trials and misfortunes with greater equanimity, than success and prosperity. Not that this was true of him after a period of popularity—adversity then, was a fall from an eminence; and the consciousness that the public mind, had assigned him a lower place in the scale of talent and usefulness, rendered him reckless and desperate. He threw away

his ambition, his ministry, and his moral character—by intemperance.

In this place it is natural, and we trust excusable, to moralize a moment on the mischiefs which occasionally result from the ill-timed and injudicious praise of young ministers. It is doubtless right, and in some instances probably necessary, that young men, and especially those who are both diffident and sensitive—should be informed of the worth or excellency of their discourses. Such praise given by a friend, will have the effect to stimulate exertion, and will give hope and encouragement to the desponding. For it will not be general or indiscriminate; but will mark with care and particularity the points of excellence, and will of course leave room for conjecture that there was still something left for improvement. And there are minds of that reach and strength, that are capable of bearing any amount and any form of flattery, without injury. But in the great majority of instances, the experiment ought never to be hazarded. It is generally positively ruinous, by fostering an inflated vanity, or exciting an

unbecoming and obtrusive arrogance. Universalists have suffered occasionally from this cause; and it were well, if the experience of the past, should enable them to avoid the evil in future.

Mr. Skeele was from the Baptists, in which connexion, he had been for a number of years, an accredited minister. And we take pleasure in saying—that in this, as in other instances, the Baptists generally gave us *good* if not always *great* men. Mr. Skeele devoted himself to the ministry of reconciliation, with right good will; and toiled on, year after year, under privations and sacrifices, until age and infirmities interposed to suspend his efforts. Always honored for his single-mindedness and integrity, and esteemed by his ministering brethren for the generous and kindly sympathies of his heart, he is still greeted by them with affectionate remembrances of the times of mutual toil. The doctrine of illimitable grace which removed his doubts, and quieted his fears, and answered his prayers, still gives him the accumulated blessings of peace, and hope, and joy.

Early in the spring of this year, (1821,) I received a letter from the late R. Devendorf Esq., residing in Oswego county, requesting me to visit his brother in Minden, Montgomery county, to introduce myself and inform him by whom sent, and the object of my visit—to preach the gospel in that vicinity. From some cause, Mr. Lisher, took this appointment, was well and kindly received, and preached several discourses to very attentive and respectable congregations. The settlement is almost entirely made up of Dutch families, to whom Universalism was as new, as if just revealed from heaven. They however desired to know more of the matter; and when Mr. Lisher left, they requested him to fix a time when their own minister (Dutch Reformed) should meet such Universalist preachers as could attend—not for debate—but for the purpose of having one or more discourses delivered by each of the parties, explaining and vindicating their respective doctrines.

The proposed meeting took place on the last week of May; and was attended by one

Dutch Reformed, one Presbyterian, and two Universalist clergymen. Notice had been extensively circulated in the vicinity, and a multitude that would have filled several of the largest houses in the neighborhood, assembled at an early hour. There was no church—but there was a spacious barn, “swept and garnished,” for the occasion; and here the public services commenced at *nine* o’clock, in the morning. Mr. Lisher by arrangement, delivered the first discourse, in support of the doctrine of Universal purity and happiness. He was immediately followed by Mr. Woodruff, a Presbyterian, who urged in a very candid manner, the usual objections to Universalism, and labored to prove the doctrine of endless misery. In the afternoon, the writer of these notes, delivered the first discourse, in which he reviewed the preceding sermon—answering the objections and adducing arguments and proofs in favor of Universal salvation. And he in turn, was succeeded by Mr. Waack, the Dutch Reformed minister—who said but little or nothing on the subject at issue.

Thus ended the services of the day. Every thing was conducted in the most friendly manner; and the large congregation which had listened to *four* long discourses, occupying nearly *six hours*, dispersed without betraying fatigue, and expressing the utmost gratification. The future could alone determine the results. And that future, in due time, did determine. Some twelve or fifteen years afterwards, a respectable society of Universalists, was organized, and a neat and convenient church erected for the use of the congregation in Minden. And the recollection of the meeting in the barn—is yet cherished among holy thoughts, and as one of the instrumentalities by which captive souls were made free.

In September of this year, the new church erected by the Universalist society, in Otsego, was dedicated by appropriate religious services. to the worship of the One True God, who is the Savior of all men. This edifice stands about three miles west of the village of Cooperstown, in a small settlement called Fly Creek. It was built by the voluntary

subscriptions of the members of the society; and the interior finished in a plain and comfortable manner, with open slips—entirely free to all who chose to enter. It will seat about 400 persons; and is well located for the accommodation of the society and the vicinity. The dedicatory sermon proper, was delivered by Mr. Stacy, by far the most efficient minister in the state, and who had literally “borne the burden and the heat” of the labors of some *seventeen years* in the neighboring region. The plan and the subject of discourse, were every way worthy of his head and his heart, and the intensity of his feelings as he reviewed the past and contrasted it with the then present time—while it affected his utterance, reached a chord that vibrated in sympathy through every part of the attending congregation. It was indeed a proud day for the society in Otsego, and for the denomination in central New York, and the multitude of believers who participated in these services, went to their homes with renewed and more confirmed hopes of prosperity, and with brighter visions of the future triumph of Universal grace.

In November, the new brick church erected in the village of Clinton, and principally owned by Universalists, was dedicated to the One God and Savior of all. This is a very neat structure, some 52 by 40 feet, with a deep gallery on three sides; but unfortunately for the comfort of the congregation, originally without a porch or vestibule. This defect has been recently remedied. and the interior in other respects much improved. The house was built by an Association, called the "Free Church Society," and about 30 out of 32 shares, were owned by Universalists. These *shares* were not invested with a view to any future pecuniary benefit, but were direct contributions, and were only reckoned as stock, for the purpose of determining what proportion of time each denomination so contributing, would be entitled to the occupancy of the church. Each individual contributor had also the right at the annual meetings of the society, to appropriate his share to the benefit of any denomination which he preferred. For a few years, both the Methodists and Baptists exercised this right, and held meet-

ings *one or two* Sundays each, in the course of the year. But this was soon abandoned, as no sufficient motive existed for its continuance; and the church became in fact, what it was always called—a Universalist church.

Like the church in Otsego, the slips in this were free to all comers; and though the doors were all made, such was the repugnance to the possibility of a little exclusiveness, that they were not during many years, permitted to be hung. Whether this practice of having the seats free, in a well finished church; is peculiar to Universalists, is not known. But it was once the rage in that denomination; and still prevails in many parts of the state. In some places where the practice has been abandoned it has been with the greatest reluctance; and in others where it never obtained, there are individuals whose feelings are perpetually disturbed because the slips are not free. It annoys them almost beyond endurance, when a stranger waits for a pew door to be opened—or to see the sexton—if there be one, walk half the length of the church, to seat a neighbor from some other congregation.

But whatever may be said in favor of free churches, several results follow from the practice, that it is at least, very desirable to avoid. In the first place, a free house is never properly taken care of, nor suitably furnished. No person or family has an interest in any particular part—and certainly no one has a right to the whole. It would be deemed an unpardonable assumption, for any one to trim or cushion a seat for his or her own accommodation—however uncomfortable it might be to occupy for successive years, a bare and narrow piece of board. Nor is there any very powerful inducement to keep the free church, respectably clean: and the congregation that will carpet the aisles, and once in four or five years brush the dust and cobwebs from the pulpit and altar, deserves special commendation.

In the next place, the expense of supporting a meeting where the seats are free, always falls—and falls heavily upon a few individuals; who are compelled to pay out of all proportion, for the attainment of an object in which all are—or ought be, equally interes-

ted. Instances, and not a few of them, could be named, in which individuals have paid from 30 to 50 dollar per year; while others of equal means, contented themselves with *four* or *five* dollars, or even nothing. Now were the pews sold subject to a moderate tax, or rented from year to year, they would be fitted up with some reference to comfort, and would receive more attention—more regard would be had to neatness and appearance, the expenses of the society would be equalized and fall less oppressively upon a few, and the true friends of the cause would be better known.

It is due to Mr. Joseph Stebbins of Clinton, to state here—although it is the last thing that he would desire; but for which he must excuse us—that this beautiful church was principally erected by his exertions, and by his liberality. He commenced the original subscription with \$500—about one quarter of the whole amount pledged, when the building was undertaken. Whether any effort was made to increase the sum by a general subscription, is not known; but if so, little or nothing, was obtained. Mr. Stebbins there-

fore continued to advance sums, as the building progressed, until he had invested nearly 2,000 Dollars. For this generous bestowment he never asked, and never received any other return or acknowledgement, than the gratitude of those who could appreciate the gift. And it is more than probable, that a majority of the worshippers in that house, never knew to whom they were so materially indebted for its erection.

Another beautiful, convenient and finely located Universalist church, was erected in the village of Madison, in the summer of 1821; but which was not dedicated until the first of January following. The preliminary arrangements for the successful prosecution of the undertaking, were in this instance, worthy of all praise. The committee appointed for the purpose, furnished a *plan* of the contemplated edifice, comprising the number and location of the slips or pews, which it would contain. They then made an estimate of the expense of building the house, and equalized the amount among the number of pews. Instead of seeking subscriptions

of uncertain sums, they then obtained the pledges of individuals for one, or more pews, the price of which was already determined. By this arrangement, the society was exempt from even the danger of that worst of all evils—a society debt; and every motive which the idea of property in a church can inspire, was secured, toward the regular and permanent attendance of a congregation. Soon after the dedication of this church, the slips or pews, were put up at auction, for the purpose of giving the owners an opportunity of bidding for a choice of seats. And by this means, the society raised a fund sufficient to purchase a fine toned bell of some 600 lbs weight. This was the *first Bell* owned by the denomination in the *State of New York*.

GENESEE BRANCH ASSOCIATION.—This ecclesiastical body met at Riga, Genesee county, in October, 1821; and from the minutes of the session, it appears that the cause of truth was unusually prosperous, in Western New York. Indeed, there seems to have been an unprecedented movement in favor of Univer-

salism, in different and distant parts of the state, and the public mind was very plainly losing some part of its hostility to liberal christianity. The doctrines and principles of Universalism were better understood, and less feared; both because there were more to advocate them, and because the morality of those who professed them, was as unexceptionable as that of the members of other denominations. The clamor about the licentious tendency of Universalism, was less loud and confident; and was being thrown back upon its interested, or ignorant authors with evident effect. It was found after some years of very vigilant observation, that the moral evils which had been so confidently predicted, had neither fallen—nor were likely to fall, on Universalists. Neither the old or young had been corrupted; and in all the domestic and social relations, they were as enlightened and moral as their neighbors. In all that concerned a knowledge of the scriptures—that related to just and rational views of their teachings, they were a class, decidedly superior to any, and all other sects. And it re-

quired a degree of confidence, or supposed an amount of ignorance or prejudice, to which comparatively few were equal, to utter in the face of these facts the stale and malicious slander, that Universalists were either religiously blind, or morally depraved beyond the common lot of christian professors.

Four recently organized societies, were received into the Fellowship of the Association, at this session—viz: those in Portland, Penfield, Perry and Middlebury. It is not known, whether those in Portland and Middlebury have preserved their identity; but it is probable that they have like some others changed their centres—that is, their meetings are held in some neighboring place, and under another name. The society in Penfield, Monroe county, has a very neat and convenient church in the village of Fairport; and for a series of years, has sustained meetings a part, or all the sabbaths. The church is finely situated; and though a small building, can hardly be passed on the Erie canal, without attracting notice. And the writer of this, has heard passengers after expressing their admiration of

the "pretty church," utter a half suppressed regret that it was owned by the Universalists! The society in Perry, Genesee county, has also a good church; and for some ten or twelve years past, has sustained a settled pastor, and enjoyed a general and moderate degree of prosperity. It was among the first in the vicinity to establish a Sunday School; and consequently to perceive and realize the benefits, which flow from its maintainance. And it is undoubtedly one of the best organized, and most substantial societies in Western New York.

It was at this session of the Branch Association, that the aged and worthy Elder, Caleb Todd, received Fellowship as a minister of the reconciliation. He had already spent the best and most active years of his life, in preaching a partial salvation in the Baptist connexion. And now, when his physical energies were beginning to fail, both his hopes and his happiness received new impulses from broader and more comforting views of human destiny. He was neither a great, nor a learned man; but he possessed in a high degree, that ster-

ling moral worth, which was of far greater consequence to the denomination. He was the father of the well known and able Lewis C. Todd; and though during a number of years, he was violently opposed to the opinions of his son—those opinions finally became the support of his age, and his comfort and hope in death.

In the winter of 1821, an incident occurred at Western, Oneida county, eminently calculated to exhibit and illustrate the feelings of many of the most respectable and influential of our opponents; and their reckless disregard of consequences for palpable violations of truth. It was a small village, where Universalism had been preached for several years; and where a large majority of the inhabitants were decidedly friendly to that doctrine. But there were two, or three families of Presbyterians, who were greatly annoyed by the countenance shown to Universalists. They accordingly invited a Mr. Brainard, an aged, talented, and highly respectable clergyman of their own order, from a neighboring town—who, after giving one or more lectures, pub-

lickly stated, that he "understood there were a number of Universalists in that place, and that he had come to clear them out!" And he proceeded to give notice, that at his next lecture, he should review Mr Kneeland's definition and use of the word *hell*, as found in a course of Lectures then recently published.

The writer of this, then resided at the distance of twenty miles from the scene of those operations; but in good time, a friend called for him to attend the proposed review. He accordingly went; and as the congregation had already assembled when he entered the house, he took a seat without an introduction to the truly venerable man, who had taken upon himself the task of *clearing us all out*. Mr. Brainard directed his labors principally, to the quotation and exposition of the more prominent passages in which the word *hell* occurs; and especially those which were generally supposed to constitute the most decisive and unanswerable objections to the doctrine of the final restitution of all mankind. His frequent and familiar reference to Mr. Kneeland's book left no room to doubt of his having

read it with great care and attention. Indeed, he was not a man to undertake such an enterprise, without a tolerable knowledge of the matter in hand; and in this instance, it was quite apparent that he was far more willing to hazard his reputation for candor and integrity, than to incur the imputation of ignorance of his subject. For he began and ended, with the quotation of *only half* of Mr. K's defination of *hell*; and distinctly and repeatedly stated he had exclusively applied it to mean the *grave*—and nothing but the *grave*. Here, he took his position, without the slightest reference to any admission or assertion that it had a further, or other import; and on this, his arguments and proofs were intended to bear. He seemed determined to employ all the means at command for the explosion of Universalism; and frequently endeavored, and with considerable effect—to render the assumed defination ridiculous.

During this long harrangue of an hour and a half, I sat within a few feet of him, and directly under his eyes, with Mr. K's book in my hand; and from time to time, turned down

leaves for the purpose of reference. This he must have observed; and it was perfectly amazing that he could persist in reiterating the assertion that Mr. K. used the term *hell* to mean exclusively the grave. He must have known, that some one, to whom he was an utter stranger—knew that he had *suppressed* the most important half of the definition under consideration; and that he was therefore really uttering a falsehood and laboring to deceive the congregation. Never before or since, have I encountered an instance of equal, unflinching hardihood. Nothing could be better calculated to deceive; for he was a man of spotless reputation. And not a soul in the congregation, at the commencement of his discourse, entertained the slightest suspicion that he was wanting in fairness or integrity.

The moment Mr. B. closed, I rose and asked permission to make some remarks. I was well assured that it was not in his power to control the auditory—to which I was well known—even if he should attempt to prevent my speaking. He made no objection how-

ever; but said in a taunting and sarcastic manner, that I might *say what I pleased*. I then asked him, if he had been correctly understood, to say, that Mr. Kneeland had defined the word *hell*, to mean only *the grave*? To this he replied—"It is no matter what I said—go on in your own way!" To this I answered—"I will do so, and will now read what Mr. K. has defined the word to mean." The moment I had read the definition, he rose and said—"I admit that Mr. K. did also apply the term to mean *mental agony*." A sound like that of a half suppressed laugh—or the smothered feelings of contempt and indignation, instantly broke forth from every part of the house; and in any other place, or on any other occasion than a religious meeting, it would have been uttered in tones that admitted of no misapprehension. The people were astonished at the impudence and baseness of this bare-faced attempt to impose on them. And the result was, that instead of "clearing out" the Universalists—Mr. B. *cleared out*, and did not venture to show his face in that place again, during several years.

In looking back upon the position and relations of Universalists, some twenty five years since, few things strike us with more astonishment, than the means and measures frequently adopted and employed by the dominant sects, to prevent their establishment or prosperity. The grossest falsehoods were kept in perpetual circulation, respecting their opinions, their moral conduct, and the influence of their principles. By these means, the ignorant were kept in perpetual fear of us—the zeal of bigotry was inflamed against us—and many, that were disposed to favor and encourage us, believed that we were as corrupt and vicious as we were represented. And cruel and tantalizing as these things were, there was generally no remedy for them but patience. For when those whom all men were ready to believe, openly and with apparent candor stated that such or such things had occurred under their own observation; or that they had been communicated by persons known and confided in—who can wonder, that they were believed. We were destitute of the facilities which were necessary to

counteract these mischievous aspersions; and among the multitude of those who slandered us, it was frequently impossible to reach or detect the original perpetrator of a given falsehood, and hold him up to the contempt and abhorrence, so richly deserved. There may be some truth in the saying ascribed to St. Augustine, that—"The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." But although the persecutions of Universalists, were bloodless, it is far from being desirable to endure obloquy and scorn, because you would enjoy your opinions, or promote what you believe to be the cause of truth and righteousness.

1822—From the indications of progress during the preceding year, it will be inferred that the Universalists of middle and western New York, looked forward with more encouraging hopes of general prosperity, than they had ever before known or enjoyed. True—they took encouragement at times, from causes which all the world besides, would deem either equivocal or inadequate. But at this time, the evidences of progress

were too palpable to be overlooked or misinterpreted. They had given Fellowship to *ten* newly organized societies, and *five* preachers; and had dedicated *three* new and commodious churches, to the worship of the Universal Father, in a single year. Besides this, it was understood that arrangements were in progress, or were already consummated, for the organization of other congregations and the erection of churches, in different parts of the state. The actual increase of efficient societies, had been more than *twenty per cent*; that of ministers about *ten per cent*, while the number of churches of the denomination had doubled. The number of the latter, was indeed small, but their location, as well as the style and finish of the structures themselves—gave every reason to believe that they were destined to subserve the devotional interests of generations to come. There were trials of long endurance before us, arduous and thankless labors to perform, wrongs to suffer and to correct, and a host of rancorous prejudices to overcome. Still a beginning had been made, and a progress at-

tained which warranted the hope of steady prosperity and final triumph. Nor has that hope been disappointed. The denomination has increased in numbers and influence, in a manner and with a rapidity, almost beyond example, in modern times; and is taking its place sooner than its most sanguine supporters ventured to conjecture. among the strong christian sects of our land.

Many of the first Meeting Houses, erected in central New York, were built by general subscription, without reference to any particular sect; and were afterwards controlled by that denomination which happened to be the more prominent and influential. In cases where particular sects sympathised with each other, some respect was paid to their several rights; and the house would be alternately used in a way to general accommodation. But where important motives for a less liberal course, prevailed—or a party having claims, was weak, or did not press its claims; it sometimes happened that very little regard was shown to the original understanding about the rights of occupation. Universalists in

some instances, owned respectable shares in churches built under these circumstances; but there were very few which they were permitted to occupy at any time, or on any occasion. They generally constituted but a small minority; and the double motive of displaying power and doctrinal prejudice, operated to prevent them from enjoying their rights.

An instance in point, occurred about this time in Litchfield, Herkimer county. A Meeting House had been raised and partly finished by general subscription—in which state it remained during several years. At length an effort was made by the Presbyterian society in the place, to raise funds and complete the house. The citizens generally took an interest in the subject; and as in the former instance, so now, nearly all again contributed, and the house was finished. This object attained, the Presbyterian society assumed the control of the house, and in its own name gave pew-deeds to the proprietors. Thus affairs went on for several years more. In the mean time a Universalist society was formed,

comprising a very respectable proportion of the wealth and influence of the town; and of course, of the proprietors in the Meeting House. This society presumed that it had a right to the occupancy of the house, and accordingly made application through its Trustees, for a portion of the sabbaths for that purpose. This was strenuously denied, although the Presbyterians had preaching but about half of the Sundays; and really needed the house only that part of the time. They also claimed that the house belonged exclusively to them as a denomination, and affected to wonder, that the Universalists could presume that they had any right in it whatsoever. Here the matter rested for a year or two—The Universalists gradually gaining until beyond all question they owned a majority of shares or stock in the Meeting House. The original subscription for building the house was also in the safe keeping of the Universalists; and after due consideration they determined to test the validity of that instrument, and ascertain their rights. Able counsel was accordingly employed and both

parties sternly prepared for the conflict. The Universalists were advised to give public notice of their intention to occupy the house, on some sabbath of their regular meeting for public worship; and to previously put a *lock* on one of the three doors of the church, by which they might enter. All this was duly performed, and each party deliberately awaited the issue.

The writer of these Sketches, was the instrument by whom the arrangements respecting the occupancy of the house on the sabbath, were to be carried out. The appointment fell on the second Sunday in February; and a more boisterous and truly wintry day, was seldom known among the hills of that region. The snow that fell the preceding night, was blown fiercely about, and piled in huge drifts; and the roads, on a less exciting occasion would have been deemed impassable. But we were engaged in an enterprise that involved important interests as well as rights: and any thing short of absolutely insurmountable obstacles, was to be met and overcome. Accompanied by two of the Trustees of the

Universalist society, I arrived at the steps of the church, at precisely ten o'clock, A. M.—which was the hour previously appointed. And here a scene was presented, which is not to be forgotten. It has already been observed, that the church had three doors. These were all in the front of the building—on that on the right of the principal entrance, there had long been a lock—the Universalists had recently placed one, on that on the left—leaving the centre to be fastened as usual by a barr. Both the locks were wrenched off—one of them lying on the floor, the other dangling by a half-drawn screw, and the barr of the central door broken into three pieces. Here, (in the porch,) we found one of the ruling Elders and a Deacon of the Presbyterian church. After an introduction and some very cold civilities, one of the Trustees asked me to walk in, which I was about to do—when the Elder stepped before me, and in the name of the Presbyterian society, forbade my entering. I replied, that I acted as the official servant of the Universalist society; that I had no further interest in the matter, than

that of assisting to carry out its arrangements; and that I should be entirely governed by the Trustees then present. One of them instantly added—"Walk in," which I accordingly did, and took possession of the pulpit.

The house was soon respectably filled notwithstanding the inclemency of the day; and the services were regularly commenced in the long disputed sanctuary. The Elder and Deacon still kept their ground, and kept up a continued noise by stamping with their feet, under pretext of keeping them warm, and otherwise disturbing the quiet of the house. But at the commencement of the sermon, one of the Trustees went and quietly admonished them, that they were acting indiscreetly, and would do well either to come in and attend service, or else withdraw. They preferred the latter; and we were left in quiet possession of the premises. Here I remained, as did most of the congregation, during *five hours*—including the morning and afternoon service with the customary intermission—and without fire, on one of the coldest days of the year. The reason for this, was, that it

was apprehended that if we left the house, it would be entered by its usual occupants, and the enterprise result in failure.

These proceedings were intended only as preliminary measures, to be followed by a definitive settlement of the question of *right* to the occupation of the house, a certain proportion of time. Another appointment was therefore made to meet at the same place, at the usual hour of public worship, on the next day of the regular sabbath meeting of the Universalist society. Mr. Stacy was to be the preacher on that occasion; and with his usual punctuality, he attended; and the house was again occupied by the Universalists, and without molestation. But on the following day, several writs were served upon the more prominent Universalists—and also one on Mr. Stacy. This had been expected, and indeed desired; as it would lead to a final settlement of the question at issue. Some arrangement was effected so far as Mr. Stacy was concerned, by which proceedings in regard to him, were considered as withdrawn. The other writs were permitted to take their course.

Prior to, and during these proceedings, the Universalists, having made an estimate of the value of the stock shares in the church, as well as of the relative proportions respectively owned by themselves and the Presbyterians—offered to buy, or sell, as the latter preferred, in case they could not agree to its joint occupation. No fault was found with the estimate, and it was admitted that the terms were fair and reasonable; but the Presbyterians had determined on keeping the entire control and use of the house. But the time was approaching, when the question of right to do so, would be settled by the highest judicial tribunal in the state. And in view of all the facts and circumstances, their counsel advised the suppression of the several prosecutions, and if practicable, a compromise with the Universalist society. The suits were accordingly withdrawn; and an offer made to buy out the Universalists on the terms which they had all along proposed. This offer was of course accepted; the conflicts of the two societies ceased; the rights of the Universalists acknowledged; and peace and harmony res-

tored among the citizens of what was called—Jerusalem.

The Association held its annual session for 1822 in Lee, county of Oneida. The usual number of clergymen and Lay Delegates were present, and the ordinary business of the council was transacted; but the general attendance was much less than common, on similar occasions. The reason for this was, that there were no other societies of the order within some twenty miles; and isolated believers, then as now were comparatively few in the immediately surrounding region. From the public in general, we had little to expect save contempt or reproach; and the virulence of bigotry was usually much aggravated by the meeting of our public bodies. It followed therefore, that those who did not petulantly shun us, took little interest, and made no sacrifices in attending on these occasions. A stranger in our meetings at that time, was regarded in a very different light from that in which he is viewed at the present time. Then, it was morally certain that he either sympathized with us, or was sincerely desi-

rous of knowing more about us—more concerning our teachings and general customs. Nothing like the careless and easy indifference with which a stranger now strolls into one of our meetings for public worship, was known amongst us, twenty five years since. On the contrary, the stranger was visible through every part of the service. And he either looked around inquiringly; or appeared restless and uneasy; or sat in mute astonishment, listening as if the destinies of eternity were suspended upon the single hour. Then, there was no sleeping in church—men would as soon think of nodding on a bed burning coals, as in a Universalist meeting. And those who had never in their lives, kept their eyes open during a sermon, were astonished at the vigilance of which they found themselves capable while listening to a preacher of the reconciliation. The believer felt that he was emphatically in a new world; he breathed a different atmosphere, and his thoughts went abroad through new moral regions. And he hung upon the message of boundless grace with an interest, alike new and inspiring. On the

other hand, the casual visitor, if he retained any portion of prejudice, perceived some one or more of the fabrics in which he had placed reliance—crumbling away under the untiring might of the new theology. All were consequently attentive; either because they were unlearning error, or learning and rejoicing in the truth.

The aspirations of the most sanguine among us, were satisfied with the proofs of progress, received at this session of the Association. *Ten societies* were received into Fellowship, viz:—Smithfield, Albany, Ellisburg, Mentz, Sempronius, Camillus, Oswego, Hartford, Dansville, and Virgil.

That in Smithfield, probably lost its identity; and its elements were doubtless re-organized in the present flourishing society in Stockbridge, in the county of Madison. A few years since it erected a neat and convenient church edifice, and has usually sustained stated preaching.—The society in Albany, received into Fellowship at this session, preserved its identity but a short time. It wanted vitality—the moral energies growing out

of the love and obedience of divine truth. Some of its friends perceived and lamented its wants, and adopted measures for effecting a remedy. With steady aim and praiseworthy perseverance, they at length succeeded. A new society, embracing in its plan of government, a profession of christian faith and rules of discipline, was organized; and has sustained itself nobly under repeated reverses of fortune. In the midst of opposition, it has continued to maintain its position. Its church is one of the most substantial and convenient in the state, and the congregation, respectable both for number and moral worth.

The society in Ellisburgh, Jefferson county, was no doubt, a re-organization. This has continued to be a strong and prosperous society; and has ever been one of the most respectable and influential in the town. It could hardly be otherwise, when it is recollected that the able and worthy C. G. Person, was its minister during many years; and that when age and infirmity rendered it expedient for him to suspend his pulpit labors, he was still there with his wisdom and prudence to

aid in every good work. This society has a neat and comfortable house of worship, and a large congregation.

Mentz and Sempronius, in Cayuga County, have merged in societies in neighboring towns, or otherwise lost their identity, as they are no longer reported in the denominational Register. The same is probably true, of the society in Camillus, in the county of Onondaga. That in Oswego, struggled for a few years, and made several abortive attempts to sustain public worship; but from want of system or energy in its proceedings, nothing effective or useful was accomplished. These failures have had the effect to discourage the few respectable friends in that flourishing village, and prevented, up to this time, their efforts to establish on a permanent basis, the very means of building up the truth among themselves.

The society in Hartford, Washington Co., has been faithful to its organization; and persevered through both good and evil, in the maintainance of its principles and privileges. It has a convenient church, and usually sustains preaching about half the Sabbaths—the

support of the clergyman, falling principally on some three or four of the members. Of the societies in Dansville and Virgil, nothing is known ; and it may be presumed, that having neglected to keep up their society relations, the members have connected themselves with other and more prosperous congregations in their respective vicinities.

The Association at this session, granted a Letter of Fellowship to Amos Reed, and conferred Ordination on Job Potter. In a note appended to the minutes of the session, it is stated that Mr. Reed was a convert from the Episcopalians. This is probably incorrect. He might have belonged formerly, to the Episcopal Methodists ; and it would be quite in character, if he represented himself as an Episcopalian. But in reality, he was doubtless neither one, nor the other ; but either, or neither, as suited his convenience. He possessed considerable native talent, had no taste for mental improvement, and seems not to have been over solicitous about the means or measures by which to render himself conspicuous. On the whole, he was one of the most

exceptionable specimens of the kind and quality of ministers with which we were occasionally favored by the Methodist denomination. Mr. Reed was ordained by us at the session of the Association the following year ; but remained in the connexion only a short time ; and probably entered upon some secular business, abandoning entirely, the duties and labors of the ministry.

The building in which the Association was convened, was an unfinished church, erected by the joint contributions of several religious denominations ; and of which, the Universalists were the principal proprietors. By the original instrument drawn up for subscription, each party possessed the right of occupying the house in proportion to its relative amount of stock. It was therefore, neither more nor less than a Union house ; and so it remains to this day. It is believed that Universalists are the last people in the world who will condescend to steal a church—they have been robbed of too many, not to know and to feel, both the meanness and the enormity of such thefts. And they cheerfully leave other sects to the

enjoyment of all the honor and profit of that species of pious fraud, and sectarian plunder.

As further evidence of the general prosperity of Universalism at this time, in central New York, it was found expedient to organize another Branch Association. The Genesee Branch had been constituted since 1814; and acting, in concert with the parent Association, had exerted a beneficial influence upon the societies under its immediate jurisdiction. The same, or similar reasons, that had operated in the organization of the Genesee Branch, influenced the determination to constitute another. These were, the distance of societies from the usual place of holding the annual meetings of the parent Association; the consequent difficulty of securing a proper representation; and the want of more direct and frequent intercourse between societies in the same region. The number of societies immediately interested in this measure, was quite sufficient to warrant the proposed organization. And the territory embraced within the contemplated limits of the new Branch, was sufficiently ample to excuse any but a very

zealous man from going beyond it to report the condition of any single congregation. It nominally comprised the country lying between Cayuga Lake on the west, and the county of Madison on the east, and extended north and south, across the state. This body was duly organized at Auburn, on the 10th day of July, 1822, and denominated the "Cayuga Branch Association." It numbered some six or eight societies, and four or five preachers, within its acknowledged bounds; and from position, and other causes, has become one of the most efficient and influential of our ecclesiastical bodies in the state. Notwithstanding the extent of the region embraced in the new Association, it left the parent body with the very respectable territory comprised in the entire portion of the state, lying east of the county of Onondaga.

These Branch Associations were considered in some respects, and which it is not easy to define—responsible to the parent body by which they were constituted. They always received a committee of the Western Association, at their sessions; and sent their own

delegates, or representatives, to the annual meetings of that body. Two objects were attained by these reciprocal delegations—a better understanding of each other's movements, and the cultivation of friendly and brotherly feelings. The Association proper, might disavow any act of its branches; but at the same time, possessed no power to compel their adoption of its own. The utmost that the Association could do with a refractory branch, would be to withdraw its fellowship. But even this could not suspend, or alter, the absolute right of the branch, to the exercise of its ordinary privileges and powers. Happily, there was a general concert of action between the respective ecclesiastical bodies of the order; and probably none the less, from the fact that it was entirely voluntary.

As a general rule, it may be assumed that societies, like the individuals of which [they are composed, derive encouragement and strength from contact and association. They mutually give and receive, counsel and aid; and adopt—perhaps unintentionally, similar customs and usages. The power of sympa-

thy is greater than that of law; and a kind word often gives a new impulse to the mind and feelings, and influences our conduct more than a thousand recognized commands.—Hence, the more direct and intimate the intercourse between societies of the same faith—the more they know of each other's condition; if there is no immediate cause of distance and aversion—the more deeply and effectually do they sympathise with each other. And they will make efforts, and bear up under difficulties or misfortunes, that isolated, they would never think of attempting. They see what others have done and attained, and they become inspired with the desire, and often in consequence, with the ability, to do and attain the same. And many congregations have preserved their identity, and sustained themselves with reputation, from the conviction, that they were as competent to do so, as others, in their vicinities. Emulation thus operates with principle; and aids its energies, and shares its triumphs.

It might be presumptuous, to say, that the production or cultivation of sympathetic influ-

ences, had any share in the constitution of a new ecclesiastical body; among the Universalists. However this may be, the effect was, to bring a number of preachers and congregations into more frequent and intimate connexion, than had formerly existed between them. Their new relations furnished new inducements to learn each other's condition, while it led to a more direct and frequent intercourse. And at that time, there were no jealousies to indulge, and no apprehensions that one society would sustain itself better, or more successfully than another. There was but one great and absorbing desire—the harmony and prosperity of the entire denomination.

In September this year, (1822,) the writer of these sketches, exchanged pulpit services with the Rev. I. B. Pierce, the Unitarian clergyman in Trenton, Oneida county. He rejected the doctrine of endless misery; but maintained that all adults, who died in a state of unreconciliation, would be raised from the dead, judged, and punished on the earth until they had expiated their sins, and would then be *annihilated*—that is, as he expressed it,

would die the *second death*. He was many years my senior, was well educated, grave, humble and devotional; he was a good and prudent, rather than a great man—refined, amiable and sociable, rather than efficient—and loved for his sterling virtues, more than admired for his talents.

This was the first exchange, beyond all question, that ever occurred between a Universalist and Unitarian, in the state. And it was brought about by the circumstance, that we were mutually acquainted in each other's congregations. I had grown up from boyhood, under the eyes of a number of the members of his society; and had often met them at funerals and on other occasions, after entering the ministry. Most of these I knew to be Universalists; and they had kindly requested me to exchange with Mr. Pierce, should an opportunity ever occur.

On the other hand, one of the deacons of the church to which I ministered, had formerly preached in the Unitarian connexion; but in consideration of his health, had engaged in mercantile business at New Hartford. Mr.

Pierce occasionally visited this gentleman, through whom I was also favored with his acquaintance. In due time, arrangements were made for an exchange, which at the time, was regarded as favorable to the charities of both the parties. The result will show that we were mistaken.

I was most kindly and cordially received by the friends of Mr. Pierce; and the congregation, which was very respectable, gave me an attentive and candid hearing. After service, I was to return home for the purpose of spending the evening with Mr. P. according to previous arrangement. But before I left, several of his most influential friends, entreated me to use every endeavor to win him to the faith of Universalism. I did not understand them to mean, that they wished him to become identified with Universalists; but that they were themselves believers of that doctrine, and felt assured that to a good man, it was a source of continued joy. They spoke of him in the kindest manner; but regretted that he believed in the cold and cheerless doctrine of annihilation. Strange as it may seem, Mr. Pierce had

in his sermons labored, and was at that very moment, laboring with some of my friends at New Hartford, to induce them to change their name, and sail under Unitarian colors. He urged that the name, *Universalist*, was particularly offensive to the dominant sects; but that by adopting the more popular and established name of *Congregationalist*, or *Independent*, we should escape the odium at present incurred, without implying any compromise of principle, or change of customs and institutions. In one word, it was an attempt to win us to become in character and practice, Unitarians. And all this, while he could not number more than *three* Unitarian congregations in the state, while we had about *fifty*, each of equal power, numbers, and respectability! As a matter of course, the insinuation that it would be good policy to change our name to secure respectability, gave offence; and I received instructions to decline any future exchanges. This feeling was general in the society; and even the deacon—formerly a Unitarian Clergyman, was indignant at what he called, an arrogant affront.

We knew very well, that other sectarian names were more popular, and consequently more respectable, than that of *Universalist*.— But to adopt that of Congregationalist, because our discipline was similar, or that of any other, for the purpose of identifying with a sect, which, however respectable in itself, was quite as odious in the sight of the dominant classes, was entirely out of the question. If we could have been influenced by so unworthy a motive, it would be more natural, and quite as easy, to seek respectability by associations where it could more clearly be found.

In what light the Unitarian society viewed the exchange, was only known from the interest taken by its leading members at the time, in relation to the views of its pastor. And while the transaction left the respective clergymen to the exercise of personal kindness, it certainly had the effect to diminish the respect and charity of Universalists for Unitarians. It was maintained, and with some show of reason, that, whatever might be the feelings

and intentions of the Unitarian congregation in authorising the exchange—its organ had exhibited far other purposes, than those of promoting the sympathies or expanding the existing charities between the two denominations. He had, in fact, betrayed a want of respect for the professions and personal feelings of those who had cordially opened their pulpit to him; and who, by so doing, designed to demonstrate to him, their Christian liberality.

Such, with little variation, the position of the two denominations has remained, in New York, until within the last few years. And there is, at the present time, a very manifest disposition in both parties, to cherish a more cordial sympathy, and promote a closer intimacy. For this, there are doubtless several reasons, which did not formerly exist—or if they did, were less obvious, and consequently not so well understood. Unitarians have learned to feel more respect for Universalists, whose rapidly increasing numbers, respectability and influence, are giving them a place among the most powerful religious sects in the

a specimen of the kind of intercourse between Unitarians and Universalists in other parts of the Union, we are not prepared to say ; but there is reason to believe, that until within a very few years, it has been very similar in character. Unitarianism has assumed that it embodied all the learning, refinement and respectability of the two sects ; and that all the weight of public odium, was on the side of Universalism. This has been so long asserted, that it is undoubtedly believed ; but it was not admissible without qualification. It is cheerfully admitted, that the Unitarian clergy are generally better educated than Universalist ministers ; but we have had, and still have, a number of highly cultivated, as well as talented men in our ranks. And in respect to the odium attached to Universalism, great as it has been and yet is—it is by no means greater than is attached to Unitarianism. Of the two sects, ours has always been regarded as the more frank and manly in the expression of its doctrines ; while not a few of the dominant sects have looked upon Unitarianism as a convenient name to cover much secret infidelity.

These perpetual assumptions of Unitarianism, have had the effect to discourage all attempts at co-operation on the part of Universalists. We have learned, perhaps more fully, to rely on God and our own honest endeavors, rather than on any human aid. And having been sustained and blessed in that reliance, it will be no easy task to win us to any acts by which we may be supposed to lean on a human arm. Nor is it at all desirable to coalesce with any religious party, however powerful or respectable, any further than the exercise of courtesy and the better charities of the gospel are concerned. As denominations, we cannot come together on equal terms; and certainly, neither party can desire a union on any other than terms of equality. The cordiality between a few preachers of the respective sects, however exemplary or praiseworthy, is far enough from the general feeling. The few cases to which we might refer, and we would be classed among them, are but exceptions to a common rule. and will exert no general or lasting influence upon the parties. And while duty and sound policy require us

to meet every overture with charity and courtesy, we must not be surprised to find principles at work, which will widen the distance, rather than promote greater harmony and concert, between Universalists and Unitarians.

One of the fundamental reasons why the two denominations will not, and can not, coalesce, is the difference of their views respecting the propriety and necessity of *preaching* the doctrine of the final holiness and happiness of all mankind. Unitarians have all along approached this subject with singular caution, if not with apprehension. And although they have assigned reasons for this, which were doubtless satisfactory to themselves, still they are such as never can satisfy the mind or the conscience of a decided and intelligent Universalist. For no rational Christian can be supposed to maintain the doctrine of the restitution, who does not at the same time, believe, that it was taught both by Christ and his Apostles. And believing this, how can he doubt the propriety and necessity too, of inculcating it, as one of the great truths in which mankind are most deeply interested. It seems

to be one of those central facts to which a multitude of others converge; and which would, to a great extent, be meaningless, were this one stricken out of consideration. To what end has God instituted a system of emendatory punishments, if they do not infallibly terminate in the restitution? Why, in the operations of his own wise counsels, does the Deity so work upon all human wills, as to bend them ultimately to entire submission to his own—if the final restitution of all was not contemplated as the result? In one word, did God reveal so important a fact, that we might treat it as if it never had been made?

It is reasonable to suppose, that it was a part of the Divine plan to make us acquainted with the fact, of our ultimate reconciliation and consequent happiness. And the conviction of this, touches and softens the heart of the disobedient, with a power and an efficacy unknown to any other influences. It inspires hope in the bosom of despair, and wins the most obdurate and reckless prodigal back to his Father, and his God. Any and every religious theory that does not embrace

this view, or embracing it, studiously keeps it out of sight, places more or less reliance upon the moral influence of the all but exploded system of terror. It is still resting on awful and indescribable inflictions, as the basis of the soul's renovation, while it leaves the creature in all the uncertainty of doubt, whether his sufferings will, or will not, terminate. The whole system of Universalism, is in advance of this theory. And while it does ample justice to the great lateral truths of Christianity, it never for a moment loses sight of this grand result of the Divine economy—the purification and happiness of the entire human race. Universalism contemplates in the process, the moral renovation of man; his gradual but sure elevation in Divine knowledge; and his everlasting advancement in virtue, holiness and bliss. This is the grand issue of the absolute paternity of God—the ultimate purpose of Christ's mission on earth, and the glorious destiny of man. And can this, with all its legitimate influences, be regarded as of no particular moment—of quite too little interest to poor and erring man, to merit occasional

mention in a sermon ostensibly delivered for the purpose of making known the designs of God, and enlightening and edifying mankind? No Universalist can ever admit this—and none ever will.

Late in the autumn of this year, I received, by a friend who had recently returned from a visit to his native country, Scotland, the following kind letter from the Rev. Wm. Worral, minister of the Universalist congregation in Glasgow.

“TO MR. SMITH,

New Hartford, Co. Oneida,
State of New York.

DEAR SIR—Having frequently written to Dr. Strong and received no answer, I take the present opportunity of a friend's departure hence, to send you a few lines expressive of the desire of a worshipping congregation here, professing belief in God's universal love, that a correspondence for mutual information should be established with Brethren on your side of the Atlantic. There are three congregations of Universalists in this country. The one

over which your humble correspondent has been called to preside during the infirmity and debility of Mr. Douglass,* the original Pastor, consists of about 130 members, besides stated hearers; the other two, about 30 members each, besides hearers. Owing to the sudden departure of the bearer of this, I have not time to write what I wish. You must consider this, therefore, as merely introductory, and we shall anxiously wait your answer. In which, if you could favor us with some particulars respecting the late Mr. El. Winchester, from the time he last landed in America, with the time and manner of his decease; and also, with respect to his wife, whether she became as we hear truly, a convert to Christ. The reason why I ask these particulars is, because our brethren are desirous that Mr. W's life should be re-published, and there remains a blank during the period alluded to. We correspond regularly with the remains of his congregation in London, but for want of a public speaker of talent and education, their numbers are greatly diminished. The desire for scriptural knowledge seems to be increasing among

* Neil Douglass.

us, and we trust we have the blessing of the Lord of the Harvest. We have heard that there are in America, several able ministers of the everlasting gospel, and that a Mr. Ballou, of Boston, has in his writings done great justice to the doctrine of the restoration.— Were there any means of conveyance, we should be glad to be furnished with this publication, and Murray's sketches of sermons.— We shall be happy to be informed of the state of religion, and the progress of liberal opinions amongst you, and any particulars which you may consider interesting. And wishing you all prosperity in the diffusion of the Gospel of the blessed God,

I am, sir, your truly affectionate

Brother in the Lord,

WILLIAM WORRALL.

Glasgow, July 31, 1822.

Direct to Wm. Worrall, No. 102, Argyle st., Glasgow."

Those who are accustomed to the present rate of travelling, will perhaps be surprised to know that the above letter did not reach me, until late in November. But the passage was

by no means one of extraordinary length. No steamboat then traversed the Atlantic, and no railroads were in existence, to transport the traveller with lightning speed from place to place, either in Europe or America. To the foregoing letter, I returned the following answer. I find, however, that the original draft now in my possession, is marked, *altered*, in several instances, so that it may vary in some measure from the copy sent—but it is substantially the same, and with these brief exceptions, verbatim.

“To Mr. Wm. Worrall, Glasgow, Scotland.

NEW HARTFORD, Oneida Co. N. Y.,

Dec. 12, 1822.

DEAR SIR—Your letter dated July 31, of the present year, was duly received from the hand of its bearer, for which I beg you will receive my grateful acknowledgments. A wish for the mutual interchange, not only of information, but of friendly and Christian sympathy, has ever been felt by those of the Universalist faith in this country, who were acquainted with the fact that there were those of like precious faith in yours. But we knew

of no person, nor indeed of any place, except London, to which we could transmit our communications. By your goodness all these inconveniences are superceded, and I avail myself of the privilege of making an early reply to your letter.

Of the late Mr. E. Winchester's history, from the time to which you advert, or of the remains of his family, I can give you no particular information, as there is nothing like a regular account published, and he had finished his mortal labors and cares, before I entered upon the stage of action. I trust, however, that the information desired, can be easily obtained from the Br. who ministers to the flock gathered by Mr. W. in the city of Hartford, Con., at which place he died. I will endeavor to interest the Br. alluded to, the Rev. R. Carrique, to furnish you at an early period, with every thing which can be collected on the subject.

I apprehend no essential inconvenience in the transmission of the works of Mr. Murray, and others which you express a wish to obtain. And here I would observe, that the la-

bors of Mr. Ballou have not been confined to a single publication. The work to which you allude is, no doubt, a 'Treatise on Atonement,' the doctrinal soundness of which will be more and more esteemed, as freedom of inquiry and liberal sentiments prevail among men. His publications of a controversial nature, are emphatic evidences of the immense superiority of the general system of Universalism which he has advocated, over all others. Several other persons have published defences of the doctrine of the restoration, but none have written so voluminously. Besides the works above alluded to, we have at this time, *eight* periodical publications—*four* in New England, in as many different states—*one* in Philadelphia, and *three* in the State of New York.—Several of these are published weekly. others semi-monthly, one monthly, and one quarterly; furnishing means of instruction to those who, by their distance from any place of worship, or other circumstances, are prevented from attendance on preaching—and indeed, giving to every class and denomination of readers, an opportunity of judging for themselves. I

think it may be safely estimated, that not less than *ten thousand* copies of these different papers are subscribed for, and in constant circulation in the United States; and there is no state, district, or section of country, where they are not more or less known and read.— Their effects are two-fold—they prevent the introduction and spread of partial and unworthy views of God and his salvation, and they establish the knowledge and faith of Him “Who is good unto all.”

From the number of public papers devoted to the propagation of our sentiments, you will naturally infer, the number of believers must be respectable. We have in the fellowship of the “General Convention of Universalists,” about *one hundred and twenty* preachers, several of whom are respectable for their scientific and literary attainments; and most of them, men of good information and sound preaching talents—all of them “ready to give an answer to every man that asketh a reason of their hope,” and instrumental in establishing the truth of God. I am not in possession of any certain data by which to establish the number

of separate societies, but think I may safely say, there are more than *two hundred* in the United States. In the State of New York, there are probably *seventy*. The number of members is very different in different societies; some consisting of several hundreds, and others of not more than fifteen or twenty. The circumstances of these societies are extremely various, some having houses of public worship, others none; some have stated and regular meetings, while others are destitute of a regular ministry—but most of them increasing in numbers and influence. Nor is the number of regular societies, the criterion of estimating the number of believers in the doctrine of universal purity and happiness. Many are scattered abroad in single families, or under circumstances which absolutely forbid their personal fellowship with any congregation of believers; and still more, perhaps, *secretly* enjoy our faith and hopes, who are *visibly* connected with other denominations of professing Christians.

From these brief particulars, you learn the “state of religion and the progress of liberal

opinions" amongst us, in general, and will deduce them from the following facts in particular. In this section of New York, where we now reckon more than *sixty* societies, there was not a single congregation or preacher, twenty years since. Here I remark, that in my estimation, *real religion* progresses in exactly the same ratio that *liberal* feelings and opinions are cherished. For the entire history of man furnishes but a few distant and solitary instances of enlarged benevolence and the daily practice of "Pure religion and undefiled before God," where the mind and feelings were fettered by the restrictions of antichristian creeds, governed by the senseless formalities of superstition, or narrowed by partial views of a partial God. With us, then, to have rational and liberal sentiments, is to have a more comprehensive moral sense, a more chastened and lively devotion to God, a more pure and expansive philanthropy, and a more circum-spect regard to our words and actions. And thus, while our views and practices correspond, our feelings are alike distant from apathy or indifference, and the frenzied fury of

enthusiasm. I would by no means insinuate, that there are no examples of amiable virtue and piety among *limitarians*, or that *Universalists* are always what their sentiments naturally inspire; but that limited sentiments naturally tend to contract the affections and vitiate the morals, while on the contrary, liberal views conduce to moral improvement and virtue.

Investigation here is becoming fearless; for the period of religious spite and the domination of an exclusive creed, are passing away. Hence the arrogance of orthodoxy, is often mortified with queries which it never answers; and its claims are rejected, because it furnishes not a *reason* for making them. And hence too, our numbers and influence are progressing—not with the rashness of passion, but from scripture proofs deduced by reason. Should you here inquire whether with this general liberty of thought and discussion, Universalists perfectly agree in every peculiarly of doctrine? I answer no: they embrace some variety of sentiments, mutually converging to the ultimate purity and felicity of all

mankind. It is this single and exalted truth, which constitutes the criterion of fellowship—the central power which by strong attraction draws a countless multitude with one consent, to the exercise of “one mind.” With differently constituted minds, we think it quite enough to harmonize in the simple belief of the restitution of all men ; and while we claim the right of private judgment, yield with full consent, this prerogative of nature, to all others. And I am fully persuaded, that stronger evidence of the dereliction of the spirit and power of Universalism, cannot be found, than in the assumption of exclusive truth in every particular of our faith.

Where the scriptures are read and man has the liberty to examine them ; where liberal views can be taught, there the truth will prevail ; and there, “its rest will be glorious.” And as every step is permanent in the enlargement of her empire, the era must approximate when knowledge, life and peace shall pour their united comforts on all mankind. When every barrier to the progress of intellect shall be broken down—when clerical

usurpation shall no longer prevent or restrain research—when inquiry shall be chastened by judgment, religion, opening a rich prospect of a happy immortality, shall instruct man to be happy *now*, by aiding him “to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with his God.”

Your letters and those of other brethren, will not only be gratefully received, but considered means of information and tokens of esteem. And should you be pleased to extend your correspondence in this country, I would refer you to the following brethren, viz :

Rev. Russell Streeter, Portland, Me.; Rev. Hosea Ballou, or Rev. Paul Dean, Boston, Massachusetts; Rev. Richard Carrique, Hartford, Connecticut; Edward Mitchel, City of New-York; and Rev. Abner Kneeland, City of Philadelphia.

The expression of your sympathy is most cordially reciprocated. And I pray you will present my respects to Mr. Douglas—I wish him and yourself useful and happy lives, continued while life can yield enjoyment, and re-

viewed with the consolation, that the pleasure of the Lord has prospered in your hands.

I am your brother in the

Gospel of Christ,

STEPHEN R. SMITH.

Mr. Wm. Worrall,

No. 102 Argyle street, Glasgow."

Such was the commencement of a correspondence, which was continued during several subsequent years. At the time of writing this, my first reply, to Mr. Worrall, I was comparatively young and full of hope. The progress of Universalism had greatly exceeded my earlier anticipations, and had consequently prepared my mind to indulge in very sanguine expectations. The bright side of remote probabilities, was continually before me, and by being somewhat magnified, appeared nearer than the reality. The lapse of a quarter of a century, without changing my views of the results of Universalism upon the public mind, has greatly mitigated the ardor of my hopes that long cherished errors would at once be exploded. There is a subtilty in superstition, by which it evades the force of

argument or proof; and which enables it to hold on, to any dark and defenceless theory with unblushing assurance and with many tokens of undisturbed conscience. Men cling to their opinions, however erroneous, quite as often from habit as from any other cause; and it is vain to expect that they will at once learn to do, what they never yet have done, reason and judge of religion. It is well that attention has been drawn to the subject of liberal christianity, so generally as we see—and the wonder is, that so much has already been effected in revolutionizing the public mind. It should encourage hope, and inspire patience; for we can well afford to wait a few years longer for the complete and glorious triumph of divine truth. Nay more, from the accumulation of evidence which admits of no misapprehension, we may rest assured that another age is to enjoy the reality of christian emancipation which we have only seen as “through a glass darkly.”

The estimates given in the foregoing letter, of the number of Universalist preachers and societies, was made from the best means at

command ; and probably fall below the actual number. It was as high however, as it seemed safe to state, as it was desirable to apprise our transatlantic brethren of our conditon and strength both for their information and encouragement. The location of our preachers and societies, was tolerably well known at that time, to all those who were at any pains to mark our progress from year to year. But now when we reflect that more than half a century had passed away since Murray first landed on the continent, and that during that time we had only embodied one hundred and twenty preachers and about two hundred societies, we can hardly repress our surprise, that so little was done. And yet much had been done and attained. During this whole time, the average increase of preachers was but a fraction more than *two* each year; while during the last twenty-five years, 600 preachers have been added to our number, being an average yearly gain of *twenty-four* ministers. And so with societies. In fifty years we had gathered 200, being an average of *four* societies each year; and during the last twenty-five

years, we have received the accéssion of more than 800, and showing an average annual increase of *thirty-two* societies. Who can contemplate this rate of progress without amazement? And with these facts before us, who can doubt the result? But while all this progress has been going on, it has been constantly asserted and believed by thousands, that Universalism was actually perishing from the face of the earth. It seems probable that twenty-five years more of similar progress, will settle the question of the extinction of Universalism, beyond further doubt or debate.

Again, late in the fall of 1823, I received another communication from Mr. Worrall, bearing date early in the preceding August. This lettér has been unfortunately mislaid, and cannot probably be recovered, unless a printed copy can be found in some of our periodicals of the time. If printed, it will be found in the "Inquirer," published at Hartford, Con., the "Boston Universalist Magazine," or the "N. Y. Gospel Herald." This letter was accompanied by a package containing several consecutive numbers of a periodical, entitled the

"GOSPEL COMMUNICATOR," then in process of publication at Glasgow, and of which, Mr. Worrall was the editor. These are also lost.

My answer to the letter referred to above, was forwarded in March 1824; and though somewhat out of place, is inserted below—not on account of any intrinsic merit. or importance in itself, but because it furnished an occasion for another very interesting communication from our friends in Scotland.

"Mr. Wm. Worrall, Minister of the Gospel,
Argyle street, Glasgow,
Scotland.

CLINTON, N. Y., March 23, 1824.

DEAR SIR—I hereby acknowledge the receipt of your letter of Aug. 12, 1823; and tender my thanks for the same and its accompaniments. In the scarcity of competent Ministers of the word, it is only by the publication and diffusion of well conducted periodical papers, that we are to expect to promote a general spirit of religious inquiry, by drawing the public attention to the subject, or the rapid increase of believers in the restitution—except in the very circumscribed sphere of personal

effort. Every subscriber to a periodical publication, devoted to the dissemination of gospel truth, becomes, in effect, the instrument of publishing that truth to others, with the capacity of the editor. Hence any number of subscribers, is nearly equal to the same number of preachers; and the degree of approximation will be greatest, when those are most widely diffused in different vicinities.

I am the more confident of the justness of this theory, from having for several years witnessed its practical effects. I am however convinced, that much depends not only on the *matter* published, but on the *form* of the vehicle by which it is conveyed. From careful attention to this particular, I am entirely satisfied that the form* you have adopted, and which has generally obtained with little variation amongst us, is the most proper. Under this form, the most careless and inattentive reader has his attention fixed, and is won to a momentary patience; and the veriest bigot will scarcely believe it a crime to read an anecdote, or an interesting para-

* Quarto, or Octavo; and short, pithy articles.

graph which takes so little from his time.—Whereas, neither of these would ever enter upon the examination of formal strictures and labored arguments, designed to disprove, or show the absurdity of their favorite doctrines.

We are still progressing both in the number of papers and their patrons. Since my letter, *four* new publications have been commenced, and are progressing with some degree of success, and under encouraging prospects. And it is a curious and interesting circumstance, that the whole number of our religious papers, if we except one instance, have a relative distance of location from each other, of about *one hundred miles*. This will sufficiently show the sphere in which each must principally operate; and their reception is expressed by saying, that while the new papers find support, the older ones are deriving additional patronage.

Ten new houses of public worship, have been opened, and dedicated to Jehovah, “the Saviour of all men,” the past year. Several of these are spacious and elegant structures, rivalling in every respect, the best specimens

of church-building in the country. A number more will be erected the present year—an unequivocal evidence of the increasing number of the worshippers of Abraham's God. A number of promising and well informed young men have been added to our catalogue of preachers; and several respectable and learned ministers of other denominations, have been converted to the faith of *universal* grace and salvation, and are now laboring with devotional ardor in the vineyard of the great Husbandman.

I fear that very little has been done in collecting materials for completing the memoir of the late Mr. Elhanan Winchester. The inquiry has however certainly commenced, and there can be no doubt of its ultimate success.

* * * * With gratitude to heaven for the establishment of divine truth in your country, and with fervent prayers for your prosperity and the blessings of God on your labors of love—

I am, sir,

with much respect,

STEPHEN R. SMITH."

Again, late in the fall of 1824, I received a kind answer to the foregoing letter—written in the name of the church in Glasgow, and signed by a committee, of whom Mr. Worrall was one. Their letter bears date the 30th August, 1824. And after briefly stating that in consequence of the increasing duties of Mr. Worrall, the church had taken the matter into consideration; and with a view to lighten his burdens, had appointed a committee of ten members, one branch of whose duty it was, to conduct the correspondence—they say—

* * * “We rejoice to hear the heart cheering intelligence of the extensive circulation and increase of papers and their patrons in your country. How pleasing is the news to the philanthropic mind; and we look forward with delight, to the dawn of a brighter day of intellectual knowledge and improvement, than has ever yet risen on the world. But while papers are increasing with you, ours does not meet with the patronage that we expected. You also mention so many new churches being erected, to worship “the

Saviour of all men." Would to God, we could get one raised in our vicinity. But we look forward with confidence and hope, that your highly favored land will assist us in the erection of *one* edifice, to be dedicated to the God of the whole earth.

We are embarked in one common cause, not the cause of a party, nor of one here and another there; but the cause of mankind universally. And it must certainly be a gratifying consideration to you, to reflect, that you have been instrumental in giving energy here, to the cause of God and man. We likewise rejoice to hear of the increase of preachers.— And if you could send over some missionaries to convert the Old World, instead of their sending to teach the New, it would be welcome news to us; and the scholars would then teach the masters.

How do we rejoice to hear of the noble and disinterested conduct of those ministers, who, when they find that they hold an error, acknowledge the same, and forsake those connexions in which they had been nursed. We too, had one of these worthy characters, who

considered it more honor 'to suffer reproach with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.'

We are sorry that so little has been done towards collecting information respecting the life of Mr. Winchester. The first volume of the 'Gospel Communicator,' is now complete, and we have ornamented the title page with a likeness of Mr. W., and if a memoir of him could be obtained, it would please a number here.

It is now more than a year, since you received a letter from this place; during which time, many interesting occurrences have taken place. We are striving to approximate as near as possible to primitive practice, both in Doctrine and Church Discipline. Our third annual meeting of Delegates from Churches in the West of Scotland, was held in July last. The meeting was opened with praise and an appropriate prayer; Br. Worrall then read the Report, and concluded with moving ten different resolutions—the second being, that a fund be formed for the purpose of circulating Tracts. Our society has taken this

resolution into consideration, and has designated it, 'The Glasgow Universalist's Corresponding and Religious Tract Society.' Part of the funds to be appropriated to the circulation of such small Tracts, as may treat on God's love, as shown forth in his works of Creation, Preservation, and Redemption. We have also got a collection of Hymns in use among us, many of them the productions of Winchester, Peel, and others.

We shall be happy to receive a communication from you in reply, as soon as convenient. Inform us of your triumphs, acquaint us with your successes, encourage us to persevere in a cause so noble as that we have espoused. And in the prospect of a glorious and delightful termination to our exertions,

We remain,

Yours, &c.

D. SUTHERLAND, Jun'r,

JOHN POINTER,

WM. WORRALL, Pastor."

To this interesting letter, I replied in the following March, 1825—to which an answer was returned in due time, but which never

reached me. It was with some others, sent to the care of some Universalist in the city of New York, by whom I was duly apprised of its reception. But like many other things, it "perished in the using"—in whose hands was never ascertained. And here ended my correspondence with the society in Glasgow.—Mr. Worrall had already written to Mr. H. Fitz of N. Y., and others, whose location was more favorable for sustaining the correspondence than my own, and my health at the time, was such as to diminish essentially my interest in the subject. No apology is deemed necessary for introducing these letters in this place. The first comes within the year 1822; and to postpone the insertion of the others with a view to their appearance under their date, would strip them of half their interest, as well as break the apparent connexion between them.

That the reader may more fully comprehend some of the embarrassments, under which Universalism was occasionally placed by means, not otherwise so intelligible, we

present him with the following illustration.—In the course of the year 1822, a public conference was appointed by one of our ministers at Onondaga West Hill—then the county seat. We had but few friends in the place, or immediate vicinity, and had no claims beyond the common privileges usually granted, of occupying the Court House, to any place for holding the public services. It was, however, otherwise arranged. A wealthy and influential citizen, who had aided in the erection of the Episcopal church in the village, interested himself so effectually in our behalf, that we were accommodated by the use of that building—though contrary to established usage. It is believed that this liberality was entirely voluntary; and that it was tendered, unsolicited by Universalists, through that gentleman, by the Episcopal society.

The Conference, according to our general custom, was continued through two days; and on the second day, all the clergymen in attendance, were invited to dine with our kind friend, to whom we were under such deep obligations for the use of the church. The invi-

tation was of course accepted—the dinner hour arrived, and we took our places at table. There was a pause in the conversation; our host looked around upon the guests, and addressing the oldest clergyman present, Dr. A. Green, requested him to “ask a blessing.” The good old brother looked up with the simplicity of a child, and replied, that, we “dispensed with such services at the table.” Our host, and especially his amiable lady, who all but “lived and moved and had her being” in the Episcopal church—not only looked unutterable things, but appeared greatly embarrassed. The preachers, except our non-complying senior, betrayed the feeling of deep mortification. As soon as I could get breath, though the youngest of the party, I ventured to remark, that, “we supposed that God *had blessed* the bounties of his providence to the use of man; and that we were accustomed to *thank Him* for their bestowment.” Our friend smiled, and instantly requested me to give thanks.

I have often had occasion to lament my own follies and mistakes—but never have I felt so

humbled and ashamed for the indiscretion of another person, as on this occasion. As a denomination, we have never been punctillious in the observance of the common ceremonials of religion. But there was not one amongst us, who was not accustomed, on particular occasions, both at home and abroad, to say grace at table. And why our good brother should choose that particular time and occasion to display his oddity, to disgrace himself, to mortify his fellow preachers, and to bring additional reproach upon an unpopular cause, probably no one ever knew. All knew that Dr. G. was both eccentric and whimsical; but this surely was no time for the indulgence of his propensity to be either one, or the other. It was a perfect outrage upon religious decorum, an affront to the moral feelings of those who were showing us unusual tokens of liberality, a scandal to our profession, and an injury to the cause of truth. Our host might, from his better appreciation of human nature under its various phases, disregard the expression of the doctor, but not so with his companion. Her religious feelings would be too

deeply wounded, and she would consider it as undeniable proof of the prevalent belief, that Universalists trifled with sacred things, and disregarded the pious sensibilities of sincere Christians. And this would operate to the disadvantage of the denomination, not only in that place and vicinity ; but abroad, among the more influential classes of our opposers. It must be a precious matter of gossip, that a number of Universalist ministers, congregated for religious purposes, had, through their senior, declined to say grace at the table of a friend. Those, however, who knew Dr. Green—his affection, his charity, his sincerity, his genuine oddity, and his weakness, would make great allowance for any thing which he either said or did—for they would be assured that he never intended a wrong.

GENESEE BRANCH ASSOCIATION, 1822.

This ecclesiastical body met in Gorham, Ontario Co., and whatever else might have been wanting, it appears not to have wanted a congregation. For it is said on the minutes, that—"wanting a larger house, adjourned to

Phelps"—that is, to an adjoining township ; and the respective churches were in the vicinity of each other. It may not be improper to remark in this place, that the great business of all the associations, consisted in the public services. They did indeed grant fellowship, both to preachers and societies ; they maintained a moderate discipline, and suspended or expelled immoral and incorrigible members ; they conferred ordinations, and kept up committees from year to year. But still, their direct, and in many instances most important influences, were principally wrought by their pulpit ministrations. Some of our strongest and best ministers were generally present on these occasions ; and the circumstances usually gave a peculiar tone and character to the public services, and by consequence they produced a corresponding effect. These were most emphatically the seasons when the seed of truth was sown broad-cast ; for many in the congregations came from 30 to 100 miles, and frequently from still greater distances.

Another reason why these occasions were so effectual for the diffusion of the doctrine of

the restoration, may be found in the *manner and spirit* with which the whole was conducted. The meetings, whether for business, or public worship, were entirely free from every thing like rant or extravagance. They were always begun and ended, at proper hours.—That species of *religious dissipation*, which constitutes one of the great faults of some other sects, never attached to the character or conduct of Universalists. Always and on all occasions, and especially at our great annual meetings, clergymen preached with earnest candor, and laymen listened with sober and devout attention. There was no noise, no solemn phrensy, no hollow pretension, no midnight vigils—nothing was done for mere effect, for winning the admiration of the stupid, or carrying purposes by storm. The temper and spirit of these meetings, were intimately blended with the manner in which they were conducted. There was a frankness and manliness, that evidently sought the closest scrutiny. Every transaction was open to public observation; and there was no intriguing or clanning, for the attainment of spe-

cial objects. For it was known that the good of all comprised that of individuals. The rules of debate, whether express or implied, were seldom so violated as to create disorder, or confusion; and while the views of each member were freely expressed, they were very uniformly uttered and received with kindness and respect. The feelings of religious fraternity were not merely things for elegant speculation; they were practical facts, on which thousands acted from year to year. Men of the most dissimilar characters, habits and attainments, came together like the children of a family who had been separated for a brief season, and whose dispositions and fortunes were different—but who, nevertheless, loved one another. It was this feeling of mutual respect and kindness, which was thrown over every thing said or done, that disarmed prejudice and won admiration. Many—very many instances might be cited, in which inveterate opposers were so struck with the affectionate spirit exhibited on these great occasions, that if they were not made converts, they were constrained to admit that there was much of

the temper and power of Christianity among Universalists.

Let it not be inferred that we have yet wholly lost the spirit, which pervaded our early associations. Much of it still remains ; but various causes operate to render it less observable and less impressive. The public, to which every thing relating to us, was then so new and so strange, has become familiarized to our method of transacting business—and the charm of novelty has passed away. Add to this, the consideration, that it is no longer a question, whether our affairs are conducted with the usual forms of decorum observed by other denominations. Much allowance must also be made, for the very sensible change which has been wrought in the tone of religious feeling among the various sects. There is much less of the vindictiveness of sectarians, than formerly ; and by consequence, the distance between those claiming to be orthodox, and Universalists, is proportionally diminished. In this way, too, the outward pressure upon us has gradually relaxed—our associations multiplied, our sympathies have been sent

abroad ; and our deep feelings are no longer concentrated upon a few individuals.

The Genesee Branch Association, at its session for 1822, conferred ordination on Mr. Alfred Peck, of whom we have spoken in another place. It also granted a "Letter of Fellowship" to Mr. Daniel Upson, as a minister of divine truth and grace. He resided and preached in Allegany Co., N. Y., and probably devoted himself to the advancement of the truth, with his whole heart. But of his personal character, capabilities, or success, very little is known, beyond the immediate sphere of his labors. If a single personal interview of a few hours, could warrant the formation of an opinion concerning the adaptation of a given individual to a particular profession, it might perhaps be inferred, that Mr. U. was little qualified for the ministry. He was by no means deficient in original or native talent ; but his intellect was little improved by reading, or by intercourse with men. And the idea that any particular or absolute necessity existed for preparation for the ministry, seemed, with him, to be out of the question.

He was familiar with the phraseology of the scriptures; and with a facility of quoting them, probably rendered himself useful to the cause in which he was engaged. Yet to all human conception, he had mistaken his calling; and while competent to do many things, and to do them well, he had unfortunately undertaken to do that for which he was least qualified.

Looking back upon the condition of the Universalist denomination, it is apparent that, while it wanted preachers, of those who came forward in that capacity, not a few wanted every thing like the requisite qualifications for the efficient and successful discharge of the duties of their profession. They were, as a class, good and true men; and the world's history furnishes no example in which more was accomplished by an equal number, with similar means. Their self-devotion, perseverance, and sterling integrity, rendered them useful, in defiance of their deficiencies. They knew the truth, and in their own peculiar way, knew how to defend and proclaim it.—They regarded almost every thing else, as Paul did his legal accomplishments—as but

dross, in comparison with that truth. Instances could be named, in which individuals assumed a *pride* in their destitution. Their lack of the cultivation for which the clergymen of other sects were distinguished, seemed more effectually to mark both the difference and the distance between them. They "believed, and therefore spoke;" and the wonder is, that they spoke with such effect, as to carry forward, in a most triumphant manner, one of the greatest and most important of all the moral and religious reforms, that has ever occupied or interested the Christian world.

Still, we cannot but be surprised, that men who have seen and felt the inconveniencies arising from the want of proper qualifications for the ministry, should feel a repugnance to the adoption by the denomination, of any measures calculated to obviate, or even mitigate, the evils under which they, themselves, have labored and suffered. It is difficult to imagine, how men of great and good minds, can have observed our condition, during the last twenty-five years, and at the same time feel opposed to all endeavors for the elevation

and improvement of our ministry. So it is, however, "and it is marvellous in our eyes." But we are told, that those who perceive the necessity of higher qualifications, will obtain them by their own exertions. That some few individuals will do something, perhaps, by way of remedying their want of theological and scientific resources, is probable ; but the work is seldom very well done. I speak advisedly, in saying, that not one in twenty will fully accomplish that object. I would refer any one who doubts this, to the self-educated men, as they are called, who may now be found in the Universalist ministry. I must have greatly mistaken them and the measure of their attainments, if they do not acknowledge, that there are many things of which they have only obtained the merest elements, and some which they deem necessary, in which they have made no proficiency whatever. The fact, then, that individuals have, by dint of exertion, done something—nay, that they have made respectable attainments, does not, by any means, meet the case. And even if it did, there are so many other considerations

involved, which render it extremely difficult, as well as laborious, for clergymen to fit themselves for their work, after being once actively engaged in the duties of their profession, that its necessity should always be anticipated when practicable. When once fairly engaged in the ministry, they have little time to spare, for making those acquisitions which were wanting when they commenced ; and if they take the time, it is so much withdrawn from the preparation of subjects for the desk, or from their parochial intercourse and duties.

There are at least two classes of clergymen, to whom it will be no easy task to form a just and comprehensive idea of the nature and magnitude of the inconveniences and embarrassments, resulting from the want of an adequate theological education. These are—those who have enjoyed the advantages of an education, and those who never made any effectual effort to educate themselves. The former will probably favor the establishment of a Theological Institution by Universalists, because they are sensible of the benefits derived from a systematic course of instruction—

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because they desire to see the whole body of our clergy, placed on a footing of equality, in all respects, with the ministry of all other sects—and because they have reason to believe, that it would tend to the great advancement of the cause of illimitable grace, as well as the elevation of the denomination. The other class will oppose such an institution, because they have succeeded at a time when far less was required, and under circumstances which no longer exist—because they have seen certain evils connected with, or resulting from, similar institutions, established by other sects, and have derived a prejudice against them—or because they have not yet satisfied themselves that it requires as much talent and information to make a sermon, as to make a hat or a boot.

Neither of these classes, is in a condition to appreciate the personal trials, vexations and labors, through which those must struggle, who endeavor to qualify themselves for the duties of their profession, while those duties are hourly pressing upon their attention, and demand all their talents and all their time.

Speculate and conjecture as they may—they can form no adequate conception of the difficulty of fully meeting and performing the double duty—of learning what should be done, and of doing it, at the same time.

It must be apparent, that the parochial services can neither be as well performed, nor the desired attainments as successfully made, as they would have been under other circumstances. And these considerations should not be overlooked among the reasons for the establishment of a Theological Institution, by Universalists. That public charity, and the personal kindness of friends, which have so long indulged us in neglecting our parochial duties, that we might prepare ourselves to become ministers after we had become preachers—will, without a miracle, in time, become exhausted. It is a stretch of liberality in societies and congregations, on which we have no right to calculate for years to come, since the particular circumstances, which rendered that indulgence necessary, have, to a great degree, already passed away.

We have all along spoken of Universalism, as if the system of Doctrinal truths which it comprises, had always been the same, and was universally understood. And in the State of New York, the views by which Universalists are at the present time distinguished, have fully prevailed, since the introduction of the doctrine, through the labors of Mr. Stacy. And considering the great latitude of individual thought and expression, claimed by, and conceded to, every member of the denomination, it must be regarded as somewhat remarkable, that so little real difference of opinion existed. For it must be recollected, that to all the usual causes which give rise to different views of a given subject, among individuals similarly situated and educated—are to be added the exceedingly different habits of thought, social condition, degrees of intelligence, and even the prejudices of the individuals professing Universalism. Regarded in these aspects, nothing could be more hopeless than the expectation that individuals of conditions so dissimilar, could ever in this world, be brought to think much alike on the fundamental truths of the

Bible, and to act as by one common impulse. And yet all this was done—and that too, with a degree of unanimity, and cordiality, and intelligence, that astonished even ourselves.

The Universalist of the last few years only, can form no adequate idea of the singularly constituted character of our ministry, or of the discordant materials of which it was composed. We had old men, and middle aged men—strong men and weak men, from the Baptist ministry—we had Methodists of all grades, from the circuit, and local preacher, to the exhorter and class leader. Some had been educated as Presbyterians, and others, Episcopalians or Christians; and a few had grown up under Universalian auspices. Among these, were men of great talents, and men of no claims to talent—some possessed much useful and varied information, others had neither observed, nor read much except the bible—some had prepared themselves for the arduous duties of their profession, by all the means which they could command, and others entered upon it without any pretensions to adequate qualifications; and with a degree of confidence pro-

portioned to their ignorance of the duties, responsibilities, and labors, which it involved. It would have puzzled Spurzheim to infer their common character and capability, from their cranial developments, and confounded the moral philosopher, who should attempt to ascertain, or even conjecture, the intellectual and moral tendencies, that identified them as co-workers in a most important and common enterprise.

But Universalism was then, what it now is—and what it is usually understood to be.—Then, as now, it comprised the doctrine of the divine unity,—*one God in one person*; and He, a Father, with all the affections of a father, sublimated to infinity. By consequence, the entire dependence of Jesus as a created, but specially inspired servant of God, was also maintained. The native worth and moral capability of man, in contradistinction to the inherent depravity of his nature, were doctrines of Universalism. The atonement was regarded, as the reconciling power of the •gospel, operating exclusively in the reformation and purification of mankind; which would

result, in due process of time, in the holiness and happiness of the entire human race. Another feature in the system of Universalism, was, the infallible certainty of adequate punishment in the individual transgressor, for all his sins—it being no part of Christ's mission, to save them from *deserved*, but from *deserving*, punishment; and that the tendency, of all divine chastisements, is directly and certainly, to the emendation of the punished. Consequently, that all the divine dispensations centered in this great and glorious result—the perfect purity and endless felicity of all mankind. The Bible—and the Bible alone, was received as the fountain of all true religious knowledge; and its revelations as the exclusive ground of all Christian faith, and practice, and hopes.

Such, in brief, was the system of Universalism, which was devoutly believed, and which was inculcated with greater or less clearness by the respective clergymen of the order.—But it will be obvious, that modes of thinking and forms of expression cherished during many years, would not so readily give way to

others of a different and even opposite character, as to enable the individual at once, and in all cases, to govern his phraseology by the views which he entertained. Clergymen, who had preached the doctrines of the trinity and vicarious atonement, during ten, or twenty years, did sometimes, in the earnestness of an extempore discourse, use terms, in reference to the sonship of Christ, and the efficiency of his mission, which would lead their hearers to suppose that they were still orthodox in these particulars. Their principles and doctrines were strictly and conscientiously Universalian—their phraseology was the growth of habit, which, in due time, was brought to conform to their doctrinal views.

Differences of opinion, concerning the *time* when the great work of the restitution would be accomplished, have always existed among Universalists. But those differences never produced the slightest discord among the preachers, in New York.

There is little doubt, that a majority believed in a future state of discipline, prior to the consummation of the Redeemer's kingdom.—

But as all agreed, that either here, or hereafter, every human offence would be adequately punished in the individual offender—all motives to dissension were quieted for ever. And it was by no means uncommon for preachers of different views on this subject, to utter their sentiments from the same pulpit, in immediate succession, and to the same auditory, without offence. Other sects have endeavored in vain, to make capital out of our disagreement, concerning the duration of punishment. But they have most signally failed—and for the obvious reason, that our liberality was greater than theirs, and therefore, greater than they had supposed. And no ingenuity which they have put forth, to promote divisions amongst Universalists, has produced any other effect, than to make the brotherhood of the order more precious and more enduring.

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